In The Shadows: The Invisible Student Cohort of Mexican Diaspora

A Phenomenological Study of *Los Retornos* in Michoacán, México

by

Irene Genevieve Quezada Sanders

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Carlos J. Ovando, Chair
Teresa McCarty
Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.

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ABSTRACT

Unauthorized immigrants account for approximately one fourth of all immigrants in the United States, yet they dominate public perceptions and are at the heart of a policy impasse. Caught in the middle are the children of these immigrants—youth who are coming of age and living in the shadows; they are an invisible cohort. An estimated 5.5 million children and adolescents are growing up with unauthorized immigrant parents, and are experiencing multiple, and yet unrecognized developmental consequences of their families' existence in the shadow of the law. Although these youth are American in spirit and voice, they are, nonetheless, members of families that are "illegal" in the eyes of the law. Many children have been exiled to México; these are the children living in the shadows of Mexican diaspora, *Los Retornos*.

This phenomenological study developed a conceptual framework to examine the effects in which being an exiled United States citizen living in Morelia, Michoacán, affected these many children and adolescents. Bourdieu's (1977) theoretical framework is used in this study and is based on his social, cultural capital concept; the assumption is that *Los Retornos* carry valuable sociocultural, bilingual and monoliterate capital that is endangered, unrecognized, replaceable, and not used to the best interest of students in schools. This study made use of this framework to answer the following questions:

1. How do *Retorno* families (nuclear and extended) develop the self-efficacy needed to preserve the social and cultural capital they bring with them to Michoacán?

2. How are communities and identity forms imagined and created in the context of this new migration shift?

3. How are *Los Retornos* responding to the involuntary shift (N=7) from the U.S to Michoacán?

4. How are teachers adjusting their classroom practices and curriculum to meet the academic needs of *Los Retornos*?

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to improve understanding of *Los Retornos*. This phenomenological case study is focused on identifying experiences *Los Retornos* encounter in their schools and family lives through their personal migration experience to illuminate how best to help them preserve the social and cultural, capital they bring with them. The findings from this study may assist educators and policy makers in developing interventions and policies that meet the needs of this cohort.

DEDICATION

Esta obra se dedica a todos los niños mexicanos que se han sentido invisibles en algún punto en sus vidas por ser hijos de inmigrantes. También a esos niños que han vivido bajo la sombra de las injusticias migratorias en los Estados Unidos. Debemos recordar que la educación no debe basarse en ni ser limitada por un programa nacionalista. La educación debe cultivar la sabiduría para rechazar y resistir injusticia y la violencia en todas sus formas. Debe fomentar gente que intuitivamente comprende y sabe en su mente, en su corazón, con todo su ser, el valor insustituible del ser humano y el mundo natural.

This work is dedicated to all the Mexican children who have felt invisible at one point or another in their lives. It is also dedicated to my children, who grew up with a Mexican immigrant mother they so often struggled to understand in the midst of their dominant society's norms and expectations of what motherhood should be. I thank my children—Jade, Taucia, and Adrian—who have always been my reason and driving force to better my life and stay focused on goals. Thank you for believing in me and always standing by me: I love you very much. I dedicate this work to our family's future generation who will carry the torch after I am long gone: Jeremiah, Noah, Raya, and Sebastian Navarro and Mila González. I love you! Lastly, I want to thank my brother Eric S. Sanders who was a great source of emotional and financial support. Thank you for looking out for me! I love you! I thank my parents, Victor Cluff Sanders and Maria Guadalupe Quezada Robles, who made the sacrifice of bringing me to the United States so that I would have better opportunities and a better life.

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Most importantly, I want to thank the families and students who participated in this project and so willingly welcomed me, let me shadow them, and opened their homes and lives to me. It is they who have made this project a reality. I want to thank my girlfriend, Ari, for being my emotional support system and encouragement pillar when I most needed it: Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> *It is illegal to trespass in our country. It is not going to tear them [families] apart. They can take their children back with them.*
> –Governor of Arizona Jan Brewer (Crugnale, 2011)

My self-portrait, delineating who I am and where I come from, shaped this undertaking in significant ways. "The knowledge constructed during a qualitative study is interpretive: The researcher makes meaning of (interprets) what he learns as he goes along. Data is filtered through the researcher's unique ways of seeing the world—his lens of worldwide view" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 36). My being has been molded by my own preceding perspectives and experiences; my perceptions are framed via my own lenses, biases, opinions, and prejudices; and as the researcher, I had to be cognizant of my own perspectives to craft the study and develop the questions I asked the participants in the study. I am a true transnational biliterate, bicultural woman.

The Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher and involvement in this phenomenological study is unique; I became an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). That is, the data were predominantly mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines. As a qualitative researcher, I need to describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumptions, any expectations and experiences, to qualify my ability to conduct the research (Creswell, 2003). I used the lens of a teacher and school principal in Mexico and in the United states when speaking to the teachers, principals and students. I assumed a more participatory role because of

my sustained and extensive experience with participants (Creswell, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and personal involvement with the research topic.

At one point in my life I too was a *Retorno* in a mixed nativity family, this is important to mention to understand how I took on a more participatory role. I too grew up in abject poverty and I understand what it is like to be hungry, not to have shoes or clothes that fit, and the desperate desire to go to school when there is no money to pay for the essentials to make that desire a reality. I also experienced the process of developing new identities through the immigration experience. This experience influenced my study by providing understanding and identifying when I had to excavate and probe to get deep meaningful data.

I am originally from México; I was born in México City, and in my formative years, I lived in Lerdo, Durango and later in Morelia, Michoacán. When I was in second grade, my Anglo, U.S.-citizen father returned to the United States and began the process of making my siblings and I U.S. citizens. I became part of a mixed-nativity family when my youngest brother was born in the United States. Two years later, I was brought to Arizona. I had to learn to speak English and, thus, began the process of acculturating into a new culture. Later, when I was a young adult, I went back to México and opted to move to Morelia, Michoacán, because my oldest sister had lived there for years and had spoken so highly of its colonial beauty. I took my youngest son, who did not know Spanish and was in second grade. He was a U.S. citizen and, unbeknownst to me, experienced the *Retorno* life with all its complexities and challenges. During that time, I continued my studies and became an educator and school leader. I have taught in a

Michoacán public high school, a private elementary and high school, and university level classes. I became a school leader and ran a language school as well as a private high school in Morelia. This experience gives me the emic perspective, which facilitated access to the students, school leaders, teachers, and immigration program PROBEM.

Using Pike's (1954) two perspectives, emic and etic, that can be applied in the study of a society's cultural system, it is possible to take the point of view of either the insider or the outsider. The emic perspective enabled me as the researcher to focus on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society; the native members of a culture are the sole judges of the validity of an emic description (Patton, 2001; Pike, 1954; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the members of the culture under study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The validation of emic knowledge thus becomes a matter of consensus, that is, the consensus of native informants who must agree that the construct matches the shared perceptions that are characteristic of their culture (Patton, 2001).

The uniqueness of my role cannot be overlooked for this study. I have also lived and worked in the United States as a high school teacher and school principal. This is experience that enabled the etic perspective as well. Etic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers (Patton, 2001). The etic perspective, again according to Pike, relies on the extrinsic concepts and

categories that have meaning for scientific observers. Scientists are the sole judges of the validity of an etic account (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

All these experiences allowed a possibility for subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and created a potential for bias (Van Manen, 1990). These arguments, although not strong enough to eliminate the possibility of bias, provided some reasons I as the researcher decided to neglect the warning not to conduct qualitative research "in one's own backyard" (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2001). Extensive verification procedures—including triangulation of data sources, member checking, and thick and rich descriptions of the cases—were used to establish the accuracy of the findings and to control some of the "backyard" research issues.

Emergent Interest in Topic

I am a true transnational hybrid person; I am also a *Retorno* member of a mixed-nativity family. My mother is an indigenous Mexican woman from the Mexican state of Zacatecas. She was raised moving from her grandmother's indigenous village to her bilingual Spanish/Náhuatl-speaking dominant maternal home to Spanish dominant school settings. Later, she married a man 30 years her senior, a Mormon, Anglo, blue-eyed blonde-haired, German/English man who prided himself on being an intellectual, well-read, multilingual man from the state of Utah. My mother had a third-grade education, but she was an accomplished artist and musician and learned English in her adult life when she was brought to the United States.

My mother who constantly felt caught between worlds she felt she never truly belonged to, raised her hybrid children in a multidimensional, multilingual, and

multicultural world while passing on all the insecurities of being indigenous as though it were a bad thing to be. She had great pride in her children who looked Anglo and in the grandchildren and great grandchildren who resemble the "White" Anglo man she so strongly rejected. Her preference toward her Anglo-looking family members stemmed from institutionalized racism found prevalent in México and particularly targeted toward indigenous people.

I was born at home, delivered by my father in México City, México. Because of my mother's health, a wet nurse was hired, an indigenous woman, Cecilia, who adored the green-eyed, high-spirited child she was entrusted with. She became a central part of my upbringing during my formative years; through her, I learned about the many indignations and maltreatment of Indigenous people in México. By the age of four, I had developed a keen sense of compassion and sensitivity toward injustice and the trodden. When I was 8 years old, we moved to Juárez, México, because my father had applied for our citizenship papers and the wait my parents thought would be a few weeks turned into two and a half years. My father sent remittances and we waited for our papers. I did not go to school neither that year nor the next; we did not have enough money. I spent my time helping my mother take care of my little brothers and sold candy, gum, and anything else that would make us money.

For the next two summers, I spent time at my uncle's small town in Fresnillo, Zacatecas, learning the old ways and language of my mother's people. My mother sent me because "no me agunataba" she could not tolerate my high spiritedness. I was too independent, opinionated, talkative, and *traviesa* (mischievous), all un-lady like qualities,

but I was in heaven! During that time, all traces of my Gringo father disappeared, the sun baked my skin dark brown, and I ran barefoot with the neighborhood children. I learned my Tio's culture and preferred the outdoors over the indoors; I learned I could outrun, out climb, and beat the boys in my neighborhood at several sports. When my father returned, he was horrified to encounter a wild tomboy who preferred being barefoot to wearing shoes, liked her hair in two braids, preferred pants or wrapped skirts over dresses, and enjoyed playing in the dirt outside with the neighborhood children. I no longer remembered him much less understood him and saw him as a foreigner, a *Gringo*.

I have always felt I have one foot in my father's Anglo "White" world and another in my mother's dusty brown village. When I was ten, I was brought to America as a U.S. citizen. I had the impression that I would fit right in because, in México, I was called "Gringa," not in a nice way, but as the "Other," the "outsider" White, Anglo. Only at my Tio's house did I feel welcomed and accepted. Once I arrived in the United States, I was called all the usual names reserved for Mexican immigrants: *Wetback, Greaser*, and many other misnomers reserved for the rejects of society. During this transition and assimilation, I found I was more than good at school despite the fact I had not been in school for two years, and I had an affinity and love for English. As a young adult, I chose to return to México and lived there several years, raised my youngest son there, and eventually returned to the States twelve years ago. I have become a proud transnational, bilingual, biliterate citizen of the world.

These intersections in my life affected my worldview and served to pique my interest to work with immigrant communities. My children have lived shared

experiences of Mexican transnational families, and like *Los Retornos*, my U.S.-citizen children have experienced moving to a country they did not know and had to learn their mother's language and culture. Cultural differences and, at times, cultural collisions have occasionally caused discord in my own family. The advantage my family has is that we are all fortunate enough to have U.S. citizenship that has provided educational opportunities we might not have otherwise pursued.

Introduction to topic of *Los Retornos*

As the United States contends with its bevy of immigration woes, it also needs to come to terms with the aftermath of the largest wave of immigration in recent history (Suárez-Orozco, 2011). An overwhelming demographic shift is taking place in an era of deep economic decline, downsized expectations, and anxiety. Complicating matters, the United States has entered a pervasive political ethos of divisiveness that immobilizes civil and constructive discourse across multiple policy issues (Suárez-Orozco, 2011). As a result, the country is at a national immigration impasse with every attempt at comprehensive immigration reform having failed over the course of the last decade. In the second decade of the new century, all immigration lines are broken—the line at the border and the queues in U.S. consulates and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offices all over the homeland (Jimenez, 2007).

The population of unauthorized migrants is larger now than at any time since the United States began trying to regulate immigration in the early 20th century. Representing 5% of the world's population, the United States has approximately 20% of all unauthorized migrants in the world (United Nations Development Programme

[UNDP], 2009). Although "illegal immigrants" account for about a fourth of the overall U.S. immigrant population, they dominate the immigration debate and are at the heart of the policy paralysis. Engulfed by the angry rhetoric and policy dysfunction are the roughly one million unauthorized children and youth who are coming of age, some of whom are beginning to "come out illegal" (Jones, 2010, p. 36) while many others stay in the closet regarding this aspect of their lives. These youth who are *Estadounidense* (i.e., U.S. citizens, American) in spirit, schooling, and life experiences are, nonetheless, illegal in the eyes of the law. Just as forgotten are the more than four million citizen-children growing up with unauthorized parents and experiencing unrecognized developmental threats because of their families' experiences and repatriation to México, a country they know nothing about.

The increasing number of immigrants in the United States has led to growing interest in understanding the situation of the Mexican-origin immigrant population, identifying their needs and difficulties, and determining various ways to resolve issues and problems to alleviate these difficulties. Each segment of the immigrant population has specific problems, from health care to labor and employment and education among others. In this study, the focus is on the struggles and difficulties experienced by students who are U.S. citizens or those who have spent most of their lives as *Estadounidenses* and lived in mixed nativity homes and who have been exiled to México as a direct result of angry rhetoric and policy dysfunction in the United States.

This return migration has been catalyzed by the national housing bust of 2008, 9.1% unemployment, and increased police enforcement buttressed by schizophrenic anti-

immigrant laws like SB 1070 Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act signed into law on April 23, 2010 in Arizona (Tumlin, 2012). Later it was Alabama's HB 56 Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act was signed into law in June 2011 seizing the title of harshest anti-immigrant legislation in the nation, and most recently Georgia's SB 87 Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 (Tumlin, 2012).

These laws have forced many Mexican-origin families to flee and return to México either willingly or through the deportation process. This growing population of *Los Retornos* is primarily made up of elementary school-aged children, as has been documented in the states of Morelos, Guerrero, Michoacán and along the Arizona-Sonora border cities (Valencia Reyes, 2008).

Return migration (*Los Retornos*) has seldom received adequate attention despite its long history (Cassarino, 2004; Moran-Taylor & Menjívar, 2005; Reyes, 1997). Recent demographic data confirms these new phenomena in international migration trends, specifically concerning first-generation U.S.-citizen children living in mixed nativity status, what some call *the invisible cohort* (Conway & Potter, 2009). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security reported a 7% decrease in unauthorized immigrant crossings from 2008 to 2009, and despite this decrease in unauthorized crossings, México has left its mark on the U.S. landscape as the leading country for authorized and unauthorized immigrants (Hoefer, 2010).

The largest wave of immigration in history from a single country to the United States has come to a standstill. After four decades that brought 12 million current

immigrants—most of whom came illegally—the net migration flow from México to the United States has stopped and may have reversed, according to a new analysis of government data from both countries by the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center. the most distinctive feature of the modern Mexican wave has been the unprecedented share of immigrants who have come to the U.S. illegally.

Just over half (51%) of all current Mexican immigrants are unauthorized, and some 58% of the estimated 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are Mexican (Passel, 2011). South of the U.S. border, the latest Instituto Nacional De Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010 (INEGI, 2010), showed an increasing trend at a national average of 35.5% migrants returning home. Of these *Retornado* migrants, 83.4% returned to their native birth residence. Approximately, 61.7% of those who had migrated to the United States and stayed a few months to a year returned to México, 38.3% that stayed in the United States for a 7-11 months stay returned to México, and 41.3% of those who stayed in the United States 1-3 years returned to México. A longer stay of 3-5 years in the United States lowered the rate of return to 14.6% to México. These figures are consistent with earlier findings prior to the 9/11 attacks, which precipitated mass hysteria and fear of an open border; most Mexican immigrants (70%) used to return home within the first 10 years of migrating to the United States (Reyes, 1997). Longer U.S. residency periods reduce return migration (Massey, 1987).

México is not only experiencing a steady growth of returning families with foreign-born children but is also gaining a considerable number of Mexican national

children who were raised in the United States and are culturally and socially *Estadounidense*. In 2000, México was third among the top 10 countries with the highest foreign populations (INEGI, 2007). Since 2000, México has gained a population of 496,617 foreign-born individuals; of these, 69.7% were born in the United States. Of the 69.7% of individuals born in the United States, in 2007, 50% were in the age range of birth to 15 years and all with Mexican national parents. The foreign-born population residing in México has nearly doubled since then (INEGI, 2007).

The state of Michoacán has reported an estimated 3,000,000 Michoacanos living in the United States. Most recently, INEGI documented Morelia, Michoacán, receiving a staggering influx of 500 returning students per month seeking school enrollment in the public schools; in a three-month period in 2011, Morelia, the capital of Michoacán, received an influx of 1900 *Retornado* students. The state of Michoacán has further reported 7000 additional students arriving from June to September 2011, dispersed across three municipalities: Morelia, Uruapan, and Lázaro Cárdenas. Of these three municipalities, Morelia received the highest number of *Retornos* (INEGI, 2007).

The unique status of *Los Retornos* makes them a vulnerable population for which academics have yet to arrive at a consensus on their classification. Scholars in the United States have classified U.S.-born children as second-generation immigrants, transnational students, "and the, next generations" (Conway & Potter, 2009), but to México, which is receiving these U.S.-citizen children, they are classified as foreigners or *Gringos* (Americans). Furthermore, although international scholars have defined *second generation children* as those born in the host state, or who arrived as children but still

carry a foreign passport (Passel, 2011). I propose the use of the new term *Los Retornos*—first coined in the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University by Dr. Carlos Vélez -Ibáñez, Dr. Carlos J. Ovando —to refer to Mexican-origin children born in the U.S. as citizens or brought to the U.S. as little children who have spent their lives as assimilated *Estadounidenses*. These children with unauthorized Mexican parents have been forced to return to México due to fear instilled in the immigrant communities by draconian laws like SB 1070

Statement of the Problem

Statistics in the United States and México show clear evidence of an increase in return migration to México. Since 2000, México has gained a population of 496,617 foreign-born individuals returning with Mexican national parents to their parent's state of origin; of these, 69.7% were born in the United States. In 2007, INEGI reported 50% of the 69.7% are in the age category of birth to 15 years. The foreign-born population residing in México has nearly doubled since 2007.

According to Dr. Carlos Ovando (2012), this return migration to México has been catalyzed by the national housing bust of 2008, 9.1% unemployment, and increased police enforcement, buttressed by schizophrenic anti-immigrant laws like SB 1070 signed by Governor Brewer April 23, 2010 in Arizona. Alabama's HB 56 was signed into law in June 2011, allegedly becoming the harshest anti-immigrant legislation in the nation. Thus, many Mexican-origin families have fled and returned to México either willingly or through the deportation process. Some families have left with well thought out plans while others have fled with few possessions and pocket change.

The theme of Mexicans in the United States has been studied from many different angles related to labor migration and its socioeconomic impact on the U.S. economy. Few studies, however, have addressed the new movement of families returning to México after years in the United States, with their Mexican-origin children who have become culturally and linguistically *Estadounidense*, in addition to their U.S.-born citizen children.

In sum, the purpose of conducting this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain a better understanding of *Los Retornos*. This project attempts to identify in-depth experiences *Los Retornos* encounter in their school and family life through their personal migration experience to illuminate how best to help them preserve the social cultural capital they bring with them. The results of this study may assist educators and policy makers in México and the United States in developing interventions and policies that acknowledge and take advantage of the social and cultural capital *Los Retornos* bring with them.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation study aims to bring out of the shadows "the invisible cohort," U.S.-citizen children of Mexican-origin. Additionally, it also includes children born in México and brought to the United States by their parents at a young age and have become culturally assimilated e*stadounidenses.* They are now part of *Los Retornos* in México. This project aims to connect the experiences of *Los Retornos* to larger social-policy issues of education reform in México and larger policy issues in immigration. Giving voice to *Los Retornos'* unique biographies is important to understanding that *Los*

Retornos are not a homogenous or monolithic group. The struggles and experiences of each individual student are unique, although all are inter-connected by the immigration experience. The inspiring stories analyzed in this work indicate that *Los Retornos* stand to lose valuable social and cultural capital they bring with them. Loss of this capital represents a failure to benefit the American society of the intellectual and civic talent of the immigrant youth (Pérez, 2009). The main objective of this dissertation is to illustrate the lived experiences of seven *Retornos,* their family and some extended family members as well as teachers, principals and government officials living in the state of Michoacán, México, and to examine the challenges they have encountered during the immigration experience. Furthermore, by giving voice to the experiences of two youth taken to México at a young age who returned to Arizona after several years of living in México might tender deeper insight about the needs of this cohort.

Theoretical Framework

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital posits that the culture of the dominant class is transmitted and rewarded by the educational system. Thus, cultural capital becomes institutionalized. To acquire cultural capital, a student must have the ability to receive and internalize it. Although schools require that students have this ability, they do not provide it for them; rather, the acquisition of cultural capital and consequent access to academic rewards depend on the cultural capital passed down by the family, which, in turn, is largely dependent on social class. Social capital is then compromised of "linguistic and cultural competence" and a broad knowledge of culture that belongs to members of the upper classes and is less frequently found among the lower classes.

Differences in cultural capital are dependent on the social capital they accrue (Bourdieu, 1977). Given this construct, *Los Retornos* could face compromised linguistic, social and cultural capital preservation and lose opportunity to gain additional social capital due to the fact México's public educational system is presently fraught with problems of under achievement and is undergoing major reform. Mexican teachers are often absent from school and have a high incidence of teacher strikes therefore interrupting the education of *Retorno* students for months at a time and thus possibly compromising social cultural *capital Los* Retornos bring with them. Consequently, *Retornos* could face an uncertain future when incorporating into the Mexican public school system.

Cultural and social capital: A theoretical perspective for the study

This project will use the lens of cultural capital as extensive capacities learned from one's surroundings, including language, expected social behaviors, ways of acting, and ideological orientations that comprise the "subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 73). According to Bourdieu, the particular social and linguistic inculcation of distinctive class, culture-based, and engendered ways of seeing, being, and occupying space that begin at birth provide capital as an index of relative social power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Social processes that include those acquired through early childhood socialization, significant others; rituals and ritualized behaviors, and participation in multiple behavioral environments from recreation through social gatherings hold capital within these social fields (Vélez-Ibáñez, 2011). Symbolic social capital (status, prestige, reputation) is also articulated on a daily basis through social networks within institutionalized arenas (Vélez-Ibañez, 2011). Because human

activity occurs within socially constructed fields, the social and linguistic capital accrued within family and community is then seen as having limited value in such institutions as schools. That is, cultural, economic, and social capitals are not recognized as such unless authoritatively recognized within particular social fields (Bourdieu, 1977).

Bourdieu's 1977 culture and social capital theory is an extended part of the social-conflict paradigm in education; hence, it is important to acknowledge that, within the culture and social capital, exists a "hidden curriculum" that is prevalent in the sphere of education. The hidden curriculum serves as an addition to the framework for this dissertation. The social-conflict paradigm is a framework for building theory that envisions society as an arena of inequality generating conflict and social change. This type of analysis focuses on the inequalities within society and the conflict that they cause between the advantaged and the disadvantaged (Valenzuela, 1989). For the purpose of this project, it is important to understand that conflict theory posits the purpose of education as a means to maintain social inequality and preserve the power of those who dominate society and the educational system to perpetuate the status quo by training the lower classes into being obedient workers (Kozol, 2005). Conflict theorists agree that the educational system practices sorting along distinct class and ethnic lines. According to conflict theorists, schools train those in the working classes to accept their positions as lower class members of society. Conflict theorists call this role of education the "hidden curriculum."

Conceptual framework: **Cultural identity**

Cultural identity is theorized about in two ways. First, identity understood as a collective, shared, history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity is considered to be fixed or stable; second, identity is understood as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory—an identity marked by multiple points of similarities and differences (Braziel & Mannur, 2005).

A new contemporary view of Mexican immigrants is emerging, related to but different from the media representations of the Mexican Diasporas of postcolonial subjects. All these forms of representation have the Mexican at their center, putting the issues of cultural identity in question. Who are these new subjects of the media? From where do they speak? Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as some think. Perhaps, instead of an already-accomplished fact, identity should be thought of as a production that is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside of, representation (Braziel & Mannur, 2005). This view complicates the very authority and authenticity to which the term *cultural identity* lays claim.

Opening a dialogue concerning traditional cultural identity is vital to removing detractive imagery that has continued in postcolonial fights of the Mexican people. The "oneness" underlying all supplementary, shallow contrasts is the truth, the core, of being Mexican, the Mexican experience (Paz, 1961). It is this individual identity that a Mexican or Brown diaspora must unearth, excavate, hold to light, and express across representation. Such a conception of traditional, cultural identity has had a critical influence in all postcolonial fights that have profoundly reshaped the world: it remains

an extremely influential and creative power in emergent forms of representation among marginalized people (Bonfíl Batalla, 2005).

The purpose of searching for cultural identity in this study is to reveal not only what the foreign and colonial experience has concealed but also how cultural identity for *Los Retornos* is rediscovered and recreated. This identity could be found in the retelling of the past and present. "Hidden stories" have played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of recent time, including feminism, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism (Braziel & Mannur, 2005). For *Los Retornos* who have lived in the United States for years and have heard unproductive metaphors for Mexican immigrants, the need exists to identify the process of cultural identity these children confront on their return to México.

Los Retornos are unique in that they have several histories to draw from in the process of developing cultural identity. *Los Retornos* have their previous American U.S. discourse of immigrants that includes racism, the American youth culture, and schoolyard positioning. *Los Retornos* are also returning to a history with remnants of colonial oppression through *castification* that still covertly exists in Mexican culture (Paz, 1961).

According to Hall (2000), cultural identity has critical points of deep and significant difference that constitute who people really are or, because history has intervened, what they have become. Hall's cultural identity in this second sense is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." It belongs to the future as well as the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories, but like everything which is

historical they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 2000). Identities are the names given to different ways people get positioned by and position themselves within the narratives of the past. Investigating this second positioning might offer understanding of the traumatic character of the "American" experience for youth who come from mixed nativity homes and who are now living in México (Braziel & Mannur, 2005).

Los Retornos are a microcultural group; they are not monolithic and have unique homogenous needs and characteristics that are complex and changing. To improve understanding of these needs and characteristics, special attention is given to the different stages of identity development Banks (1993) identified as a typology of a microcultural group. He theorized that individuals who belong to a minority ethnic group also belong to many other groups within that ethnicity and that there are many groups one can belong to, such as kinship, religious, and economic, that can be a cogent factor in developing identity. Banks identified six stages of cultural identity; this research project will focus on the first three: First is cultural psychological captivity; during this stage, the individual has internalized negative ideologies and beliefs about his or her ethnic or cultural group that are institutionalized within the society. Consequently, the Stage 1 person exemplifies rejection and low self-esteem. The individual is ashamed of his or her cultural group and identity during this stage and may respond in a number of ways, including avoiding situations that lead to contact with other ethnic groups or striving aggressively to become highly culturally or assimilated. This process best explains why

Mexican immigrant families usually move to areas with a high concentration of Mexican people and shop in stores like Ranch Market that target Hispanic communities. Alexis Robles best described this cultural isolation and psychological encapsulation:

> *"It's strange that when we were living in Arizona I always felt like couldn't socialize with the Gringitos or didn't know how to because at my school we didn't have many, there were some but I was never their friend. I felt more comfortable with the other Mexican kids, we could talk about being scared of the Migra and El Piolin (A radio station character on radio Campesina) and we all knew what we were talking about without having to explain it.*

The second stage is characterized by cultural encapsulation and cultural exclusiveness, including voluntary separatism. The individual participates primarily within his or her own cultural group community and believes that his or her cultural group is superior to that of others. Many stage-two individuals have internalized the dominant societal myths about the superiority of their group and the innate inferiority of other groups and races. A perfect example of this stage is illustrated within the researcher's family structure; her sister opted to raise her children as English only speakers and forbid her children to speak Spanish and she stopped using Spanish altogether as a means of protection against the racism towards Mexicans she encountered as a recent immigrant in the 1970's

The third stage provides cultural identity clarification. The individual is able to clarify personal attitudes and cultural identity, reduce intra-psychic conflict, and develop positive attitudes toward his or her cultural group. The individual learns to accept self, thus developing characteristics needed to accept and respond more positively to outside cultural groups. Self-acceptance is a prerequisite for accepting and responding positively

to other people. This stage was very present in *Los Retornos* in Michoacán; for example, Tony's sense of identity and belonging was so strong that he went from doing everything wrong and making bad choices in Florida to excelling academically in Morelia as a result of feeling accepted and developing positive attitudes towards his mother's family and culture.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Critical racial theory (CRT) draws from and extends a broad literature base of critical theory in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies. Crenshaw (2002) explained that, in the late 1980s, various legal scholars felt limited by work that separated critical theory from conversations about race and racism. With other "outsider" scholars, Crenshaw (2002) was "looking for both a critical space in which race was foregrounded and a race space where critical themes were central" (p. 19). Matsuda (1991) defined that CRT space as:

> The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

Thus, not listening to the lived experiences and histories of those oppressed by institutionalized racism would limit the scholarship of this project.

Using a CRT lens means analyzing deficit theorizing and data that may be limited by omission of the voices of people of color (Crenshaw, 2002). Such deficit-informed research often identifies deprivation in communities of color. However, the aim of this project is to highlight the wealth in multiculturalism, bilingualism *Los Retornos* bring to their communities. Indeed, one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in

U.S. schools is deficit thinking. Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their children's education (Crenshaw, 2002). These racialized assumptions about communities of color often lead schools to default to the banking method of education critiqued by Freire (1973), Valenzuela (1999), and Kozol (2005). As a result, schooling efforts usually aim to fill up supposedly passive students with forms of cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society and subtractive schooling.

Scholars García and Guerra (2004) found that such deficit approaches to schooling begin with over-generalizations about family background and are exacerbated by a limited framework for interpreting how individual views about educational success are shaped by personal "sociocultural and linguistic experiences and assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes" (p. 163). Educators often assume that schools work, and those students, parents, and communities need to change to conform to an already effective and equitable system; Valenzuela (1999) affirmed that, rather than students failing schools, schools fail students with a pedagogical logic that not only assures the ascendancy of a few but also jeopardizes access to all but those who are "academically strong or who belong to academically supportive networks" (p. 30).

Indeed, García and Guerra (2004) acknowledged that deficit thinking permeates U.S. society, and both schools and those who work in schools mirror these beliefs. They argued that this reality necessitates a challenge of personal and individual race, gender, and class prejudices expressed by educators, as well as a "critical examination of

systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from non-dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds" (p. 155). Kozol (2005) identified deficit practices in the manner in which teachers are indoctrinated to accept the NCLB promise and accept the logic of attempting to move children out of their cast and color into "racially desegregated" pedagogy (p. 272).

CRT can offer an opportunity to move away from deficits by identifying, analyzing, and challenging distorted notions of *Los Retornos*. Valencia Reyes' (2008) work in Morelos, México, identified distorted notions teachers demonstrated towards *Los Retornos*; teachers stated that they were "lagging in math, lacked motivation to learn, couldn't speak Spanish well enough to pass, they self-isolated, and could not keep up with rigors of the class" (p. 40). Indeed, culture influences how society is organized, how school curriculum is developed, and how pedagogy and policy are implemented, and *Los Retornos* have already been labeled as "culturally different," are referred to as "*gringos, pochos, ni de aquí ni de allá*" as was noted in the Morelos study (Valencia Reyes, 2008).

In social science, the concept of culture for minorities has taken on many divergent meanings. For the purposes of this project, *culture* is not used to refer to a set of characteristics that are fixed or static (Gómez-Quiñones, 1977). For example, with students of color, culture is frequently represented symbolically through language and can encompass identities, encompassing immigration status, gender, phenotype, sexuality, and region, as well as race and ethnicity. Through a CRT lens, the cultures of students of color can be nurtured to empower them (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001; Bernal, 2002).

Focusing on research with Latina and Latino families, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (1992), Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992), and Olmedo (1997) asserted that culture can be formed from communal funds of knowledge (González et al., 1995; González & Moll, 2002), but it has not been recognized by many schools as valuable. CRT challenges this deficit thinking and understanding of the empowering potential of the cultures of communities of color.

CRT research for this project began with the perspective that communities of color have multiple strengths. In contrast, deficit scholars bemoan a lack of cultural capital—what Hirsch (1988, 1996) termed *cultural literacy*—in low-income communities of color. Such research uses a deficit analytical lens and places value judgments on communities that often do not have access to white, middle or upper class resources. In contrast, CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of communities of color as places of cultural poverty or disadvantages, instead focusing on and learning from these communities' cultural assets and wealth (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1997). The children's voices, as well as those of the parents will serve as *Testimonios* of rich data. A CRT lens can reveal insight into the schooling experiences of *Los Retornos* in the context of the social construction of Mexicans as "other," played out in the United States in the anti-immigrant, xenophobic mantra, but also in México as the *Gringo or Pocho* who does not know Spanish, does not fit into social norms of the country—*ni de aquí ni de allá*—, and is "different."

Through their stories, this project will capture the successes and daily indignities that take a toll on the integrity and livelihood of *Los Retornos*. Solórzano-Yosso (2001)

argued that stories are critical to creating shared memory and history and serve to counter the internalization of self-blame that results from racism. Stories told by people of color stand in opposition to the stock stories that construct realities in ways that legitimize power and position. Stories by people of color can counter the stories of the "oppressor" (Tate, 1995, p. 216). Comparing the schooling experience for *Los Retornos* in the United Sates with that in México will provide a powerful picture of the challenges *Los Retornos* have experienced in their schooling experiences. Their narratives will serve as an opportunity for them to legitimize and counter their positions as the "other" into a positive, empowering view of the English dominant, bilingual and multicultural skills they bring to school. Solorzano-Yosso (2001) stated that "if we look at the way public education is currently configured, it is possible to see the ways CRT can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience" (p. 18).

The concept of castification cannot be ignored in this project because it is part of the deficit argument concerning communities of color and class in México. Tate (1995), argued that, for ethnic, racial, and language minorities in the United States, the reality constructed is one of "castification, which is fundamentally an institutionalized way of exploiting one social group, . . . thus reducing this group to the status of a lower caste that cannot enjoy the same rights and obligations possessed by other groups" (p. 30). For example, a different sense of alienation evolves when Anglo teachers and Mexican students hold a different understanding about school. Because teachers and administrators are in a better position than students to impose their perspective, the demand that students

embrace their teacher's view of caring is tantamount to requiring their active participation in a process of cultural and linguistic eradication (Valenzuela, 1999).

Trueba (1989) argued that castification is the most effective way of disempowering social groups and coexists with postcolonial democratic systems that, in fact, have perpetuated castification. The castification, oppression, and marginalization of subordinate groups are maintained in the power of language, which in the dominant public discourse, embodies the ideologies of cultural domination and racism-coded language. Language-based racism has had the effect of licensing institutional discrimination, "whereby both unauthorized and authorized immigrants materially experience the loss of their dignity, the denial of their humanity, and in many cases outright violence" (Santa Ana, 2002). Such terms as: *Wetback, illegal aliens,* a *sea of brown faces, mongrels, invasion of brown hordes, awash under a brown tide, the browning of California, the raging American disease, different from our own,* and *non-White hordes,* misnomers used by the popular press, not only dehumanize Mexicans but also serves to justify the hatred perpetuated against subordinate groups (Santa Ana, 2002). For *Los Retornos* now living in México, the same coded language appears in the form educational discourse concerning *the other*, *Pocho,* and even *Gringos*. These labels contribute to the castification of *Los Retornos,* the newcomers.

"Racism in México is covered up," said Wilkinson (2010), head of the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination. "There is a lot of denial about racism in Mexico" (p. 1). The racism and discrimination in México is targeted toward the *moreno, prieto,* and *indio,* as well as toward the poor, the agrarian, indigenous peasant people;

these samplings support my hypothesis that the caste system is alive, well in México, and might influence how educators see *Los Retornos* who represent agrarian indigenous communities. The castification that Trueba (1989) addressed may be a reality for many of the returning families and may be a stronger influence than previously identified, possibly even hindering *Los Retornos*' positive integration into school.

Suárez-Orozco (1995) indicated that, equally dangerous if not more dangerous, is the "nice" language used in the immigration debate to construct Latino immigrants in the public sphere in a way that justifies cultural and material assault on their dignity and livelihood. According to Suárez-Orozco, among the myths in the immigration debate is that immigrants and their children do not assimilate well. Suárez-Orozco argued that this concern is greatly exaggerated. This same rhetoric has been identified in México through previous research conducted in the states of Morelos and Guerrero (Valencia Reyes, 2009).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to direct this study:

1. How do *Retorno* families develop the self-efficacy needed to preserve the social and cultural capital they bring with them to Michoacán?
2. How are communities and identity forms imagined and created because of this new migration shift?
3. How are *Los Retornos* responding to the involuntary shift (N=7) from the U.S to Michoacán?

4. How are teachers adjusting their classroom practices and curriculum to meet the academic needs of *Los Retornos*?

Hypothetical Generality I

I approach this project with the assumption that children and their families who are *Los Retornos* carry social, linguistic, and cultural capital that is valued within their own social networks but not necessarily by educational and socioeconomic institutions. However, these students are likely to possess many of the social, linguistic, and literacy abilities identified by The New London Group (1996) as important for all students through increasing local diversity and global connectedness. These abilities involve multilingualism and multiculturalism that include negotiating regional, ethnic, indigenous, or class-based languages or dialects; variations in register across social contexts; hybrid cross-cultural discourses; code switching among different languages, dialects, or registers; different visual and iconic meanings; and variations in gestural relationships among people, language, and material objects (The New London Group, 1996).

Hypothetical Generality II

There is fear that the social and cultural capital will not be recognized by schools, so valuable resources will be lost to these and all school-aged children. Economic and social institutions additionally stand to lose benefits that accrue from school support of linguistic and cultural diversity, including the promotion of metacognitive abilities that allow individuals to reflect critically on complex systems and their interactions (The New London Group, 1996). Not only will important sociocognitive assets be lost without

recognition of *Los Retornos*' linguistic and cultural capital, but also social problems are likely to ensue if school remedies fail. There is evidence that ongoing socioeconomic conditions will create for the children and their families' reactions of anxiety, discomfort, and familial discord, which will, over time, result in increased conflict between children, their parents, their schools, and communities.

Hypothetical Generality III

Los Retornos being a microcultural group makes them unique in that they have several histories to draw from in the process of developing cultural identity; they have the U.S. American discourse of immigrants that includes racism, American youth culture, and schoolyard positioning and Mexican history riddled with inherited postcolonial oppression expressed through biases of covert castification. The purpose of searching for cultural identity in this project is not simply to reveal what the colonial experience has concealed but the hidden continuities it suppressed and how the rediscovery and production of identity is grounded in the retelling of the past (Hall, 1997). For *Los Retornos* who are either U.S. citizens or have lived in the United States for years and have heard unproductive metaphors about Mexican immigrants, the need to identify the process of cultural identity is important.

Definition of Terms

Castification:

This term is derived from the sociological definition of *caste*: (a) an endogamous and hereditary social group limited to persons of the same rank, occupation, economic

position, and so forth, and having mores distinguishing it from other such groups; (b) any rigid system of social distinctions (Trueba, 1989).

Cultural Capital:

The first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital was produced by Pierre Bourdieu, who defined the concept as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Bourdieu, 1977). Examples can include education, intellect, style of speech, dress, and even physical appearance, et cetera (Bourdieu, 1977).

CURP:

Clave Única de Registro de Población. An equivalent number to the United States social security card (Zúñiga, 2008)

***Estadounidense*:**

A person that was born in the United States

Gringo:

Noun, plural gringos. Usually disparaging (in Latin America or Spain) a foreigner, especially one of U.S. or British descent (Random House Dictionary, 2013).

Illegal alien:

These are negative, informal, offensive, and polarizing terms used to refer to unauthorized immigrants. It dehumanizes and objectifies, making foreigners faceless criminals (Santa Ana, 2002).

***Illegal immigrant*:**

This is a problematic term because of the way it is defined in the U.S. government's official and public discourse. The term *illegal immigrant* may be applied to someone who has entered the country without the established customs control or a foreigner who has committed certain kinds of crimes. The whole concept is "elusive" and used by governments as a means of control. In the United States, the meaning of "illegal immigrant" is interconnected with racial biases in the mainstream society (Marquardt, Steigenga, Williams, & Vásquez, 2011, p. 9).

IMSS:

Instituto mexicano de Seguro social. IMSS is a governmental organization that assists public health, pensions and social security in México operating under Secretaría de Salud (Secretariat of Health).

***Indio*:**

For many Mexicans, *Indio* is a racist/classist insult. Indigenous peoples in México are generally at the bottom of the economic and social ladder, and native people generally have darker skin than people with European mixed ancestry do. Thus, for many people, to call someone *indio* is to say that he or she is an underclass, seen as unwanted, uneducated, poor, dark-skinned—that is, undesirable (Paz,1961).

Los Retornos:

Dr. Carlos Veléz-Ibañez and Dr. Carlos J. Ovando first coined this term in the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University, soon after SB 1070 went into law. It is a term that is evolving in the literature. *Los Retornos* are children who are U.S. citizens,

or who have lived their lives in the United States, are English and Spanish speakers, bicultural and are U.S. American in culture; these children have relocated to México by their unauthorized parents.

Microculture:

A social group that shares distinctive traits, values, and behaviors that set it apart from the parent macroculture of which it is a...

highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072486694/student_view0/glos&hellip

Moreno:

Makes reference to a person who is of African descent. Se referirse a un hombre o mujer proveniente del continente africano o perteneciente a la diáspora africana, afrodescendiente, afroamericano (Paz, 1961)

Ni de aquí ni de allá:

The literal English translation of this phrase is “neither from here nor there.”

***Pocho*:**

This term refers to a person who wants to be a *Gringo*; *Pocho* means Americanized Mexican or a Mexican who has lost his or her culture (usually meaning the person has lost the ability to speak Spanish). It is a derogatory term and can be used to refer to someone who is trying to “act White.” Paz (1961) best described this term as a Mexican seeing a Chicano stuttering his Spanish and thinking to himself, Pocho. What an embarrassment.

SEP:

Secretaría de Educación Pública. Mexican Department of Education

Social Capital:

Social capital is the expected collective or economic benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups. Although different social sciences emphasize different aspects of social capital, they tend to share the core idea "that social networks have value" (Bourdieu, 1977).

***Unauthorized immigrant*:**

This term is linked to racial stereotypes and violent criminality. It refers to a person who is in the country but is out of status for not following the formal procedures of legalizing his or her stay in the country—either as a foreigner or as an immigrant (Marquardt et al., 2011).

***Undocumented immigrant*:**

This term refers to a person who has no documents showing the legality of his or her status in the country. It would be a mistake to assume that unauthorized immigrants do not have any documents. Many of them do, such as drivers' licenses issued by the state of residence in the United States, passports from their home countries, and identification cards issued by the consulates. Many of them, however, do not possess social security numbers, permanent residency documents (green cards), or American passports—"documents that mark their formal status as members of society" (Marquardt et al., 2011, p. 9).

***Wetback*:**

This is a racial slur referring to Mexicans. The term originates from Operation Wetback—"a 1954 operation by the United States Immigration and Naturalization

Service (INS) to remove illegal immigrants, mostly Mexican nationals from the southwestern United States (Balderrama, 2006).

Significance of the Study

Why should educators and social scientists care about *Los Retornos*? The well-being of U.S.-citizen children in mixed nativity families who have returned to México should be especially important to the United States; immigrant children are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population. About 5.5 million children in this country have at least one parent who is an illegal immigrant, according to an estimate by the (Passel, 2011). Among those, their parents brought about one million children here illegally while about 4.5 million are U.S. citizens. In all, about 9.5 million people live in "mixed status" families that include American citizen children and unauthorized immigrants (Passel, 2011).

Unauthorized status casts a shadow that extends to children who are citizens as well as to undocumented children; it affects their cognitive development, engagement in school, and ability to be emerging citizens (Suárez-Orozco, C., Yoshikawa, H., & Teranishi, M. 2011). As stated previously, the state of Michoacán received more than 10,000 returning families in a 6-month period. In 2008, nearly one in four youth aged 17 and under lived with an immigrant parent, up from 15% in 1990 (Passel, 2011).

Among children younger than nine years of age, those with immigrant parents account for virtually all of the net growth since 1990. What these demographic trends portend for the future of immigrant children, however, is highly uncertain for several

reasons. First, whether they achieve social integration and economic mobility depends on the degree of access they have to quality education from preschool through college.

Second, these young immigrants are coming of age in an aging society that will require unprecedented social expenditures for health and retirement benefits for seniors in the United States. Third, more than five million youth now reside in households of mixed legal status, where one or both parents are unauthorized to live and work in the United States, a situation that heightens further the uncertainty about the futures of these youth (Passel, 2011). Although nearly three fourths of children who live with undocumented parents are citizens by birth, their status as dependents of unauthorized residents thwarts integration prospects during their crucial formative years (Passel, 2011). Even having certifiably legal status is not enough to guarantee children's access to social programs if parents lack information about child benefits and entitlements, as well as the ability to navigate complex bureaucracies in the United States and México.

Contemporary migrant youth are unique, varied, and more diverse by regional origin, socioeconomic rank, and settlement patterns than preceding waves of migrants; their growth in numbers has coincided with an era of elevated socioeconomic inequality. Recent studies in the states of Morelos and Guerrero indicate economic and social status for *Los Retornos* is cause for concern. *Retorno* families will be unable to capitalize on the social and cultural capital these families bring with them because of economic hardships they face upon their return. Furthermore, previous research in the state of Morelos indicated that this social and cultural deprivation would create anxiety,

discomfort, and even family conflict, which can only increase during the development of cultural conflict between children, parents, schools, and communities.

Concerning social indicators, children with U.S. citizenship, and English-dominant skills, fare worse than their native-born counterparts in México. For example, as previously found in the research in Morelos and Guerrero (Valencia Reyes, 2008), compared with their native-born counterparts, *Retorno* youth are more likely to live in poverty, go without needed medical care, and drop out of high school, thus could experience behavioral problems and self-isolationism. At the same time, however, those *Los Retornos* who have extended family in México who can afford to offer help for extended periods tend to fare a little better. Unfortunately, *Retorno* youth whose parents abandoned them for years and have emotionally disconnected from their extended family find a new reality because their parents have limited earning capacity and often encounter integration roadblocks they did not expect to find.

Immigrant transnational families face many risks. The migration itself sometimes separates parents from their children emotionally and, at times, for those who choose to return to the United States to work, physically. Mixed legal status afflicts many families, especially those from México. Parents' unauthorized status can mire children in poverty and unstable living arrangements in the United States and México. Sometimes unauthorized parents are too fearful of deportation and fear the loss of their children to U.S. Child Protective Services; once they get to México, these parents are hesitant to divulge their children are U.S. citizens and seek Mexican citizenship as a means of protection. This hidden citizenry, the invisible cohort, might create identity conflicts.

Although this fear may seem unfounded, anecdotal evidence drawn from news, advocacy reports, and research over the last half decade have shown a disturbing number of children with detained or deported parents are now in foster care. Immigration policies and laws are based on the assumption that families will and should be united, whether parents are deported or not. Similarly, child welfare policy aims to reunify families whenever possible. In practice, however, when mothers and fathers are detained and deported and their children are relegated to foster care, family separation can last for extended periods if not be permanent. Too often, these children lose the opportunity to see their parents ever again when a juvenile dependency court terminates parental rights. In fiscal year 2011, the United States deported a record-breaking 397,000 people and detained nearly that many. According to recently released federal data, a growing number of deportees are parents. In the first 6 months of 2011, the federal government removed more than 46,000 mothers and fathers of U.S.-citizen children.

In the 10-year period between April 1997 and August 2007, the United States deported 87,884 legal permanent residents (LPRs) for minor criminal convictions at an average rate of approximately 8,700 per year (Baum, Jones & Barry, 2010). Lawful permanent residents deported during this time lived in the United States an average of approximately 10 years, long enough to form families. The majority (53%) of these legal permanent residents had at least one child living with them. In the 10-year period described above, the United States deported the lawful permanent resident mother or father of approximately 103,000 children. At least 88,000 (86 percentage) of these children were U.S. citizens. Moreover, approximately 44,000 of these children were

under the age of five when their parents were deported. In addition to these children, more than 217,000 other immediate family members—including U.S.-citizen husbands, wives, brothers, and sisters—were affected by the deportation of legal permanent residents (Baum, Jones & Barry, 2010). The independent analysis of DHS data by the International Human Rights Law Clinic indicated that more than 100,000 children were affected by parental deportation between 1997 and 2007 and that at least 88,000 of these children were U.S. citizens.

Whether children entered foster care as a direct result of their parents' detention or deportation or they were already in the child welfare system, immigration enforcement systems erect often-insurmountable barriers to family unity. For example, in Maricopa and Pima counties in Arizona, dependency attorneys said they had recently faced barriers to reunifying families because undocumented parents cannot legally be hired without proper identification. "Undocumented parents" face the issue where the parent's rights are severed and the fact that they are undocumented and working under the table plays a factor. "Their status is never asked outright; well sometimes it is, but usually it's 'Do you have a job; do you have pay stubs?' It is usually about work and not being able to prove it (Freed Wessler, 2011). This fear of U.S. authorities taking their children against their will drives many *Retorno* families to avoid reporting their children as U.S. citizens in México, hindering the ability for children to embrace their *Estadounidense* identity, thus possibly creating conflicting identities for these youth. The situation facing exiled *Retornos* living in México is complex and multi-dimensional in nature and educators and social scientists cannot begin to understand their needs without further study and by

listening directly to their stories. This study attempts to reveal the unique needs this cohort is facing through a collection of voices, narrators who are the new invisible cohort of the raging immigration debate. What makes this study important is that it will contribute to the list of limited literature that presently exists. Research done in the states of Morelos, and Sonora indicate that each state in México is dealing with this cohort in their own unique way. For example, in the state of Morelos, school matriculation was delayed for students who did not have a CURP (Clave Única de Registro de Población), but in Michoacán, schools were more lenient and accepting of students who did not have a CURP. In the state of Sonora, the increased numbers of Spanish Language Learners in schools and limited teacher training available has made it difficult for students to transition smoothly into the Mexican school system. It is important to add to the literature in the hopes that it will eventually lead to a uniform matriculation system in schools, better teacher training and uniform government agency policies.

In sum, the purpose of conducting this qualitative phenomenological study is to illuminate a better understanding of *Los Retornos* through their *Testimonios,* their lived experiences. This project attempts to identify in-depth experiences *Los Retornos* encounter in their school and family life through their personal migration experience to illuminate how best to help them preserve the social cultural capital they bring with them.

This dissertation study aims to bring out of the shadows "the invisible cohort," U.S.-citizen children of Mexican-origin. Additionally, it also includes children born in México and brought to the United States by their parents at a young age and have become culturally assimilated e*stadounidenses.* They are now part of *Los Retornos* in México.

This project aims to connect the experiences of *Los Retornos* to larger social-policy issues of education reform in México and larger policy issues in immigration. Giving voice to *Los Retornos'* unique biographies is important to understanding that *Los Retornos* are not a homogenous or monolithic group. The struggles and experiences of each individual student are unique, although all are inter-connected by the immigration experience. The inspiring stories analyzed in this work indicate that *Los Retornos'* stand to lose valuable social and cultural capital they bring with them. Loss of this capital represents a failure to benefit the American society of the intellectual and civic talent of the immigrant youth (Pérez, 2009).

This theme of repatriation and expulsion is not a new phenomenon created by draconian laws like SB 1070. Mexican origin people have been expulsed, repatriated and treated with contempt by the United States since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, when the attitude of what to do with these inferior people was part of the political agenda.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Birth of Racist Agendas toward Mexicans

Repatriation and racism toward Mexican immigrants is not a new topic in the history of the United States. From the beginning of official dealings between the United States and México, racist agendas toward Mexicans as the inferior or the "Other" prevailed and paved the way for American sentiment toward Mexicans. A historical review of U.S. treatment of its neighbors to the south shows that these biases existed even before the Mexican-American War. By the time delegates from the U.S. government and the Republic of México met to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the attitude of what to do with these inferior people was part of the political agenda. The agreement "established a new border between the two nations, provided official recognition of the United States' previous annexation of Texas, and provided for the payment by the United States of 15 million dollars to México in exchange for México's former northern provinces" (Gutiérrez, 1995). The Mexican delegates emphasized that the well-being of the citizens left behind in the new territory needed to be protected under the Constitution of the United States of America by allowing freedom of religion and their property rights. Additionally, the Treaty guaranteed citizenship to those who renounced their Mexican citizenship and remained in the United States for more than a year. Nevertheless, controversial attitudes towards granting Mexicans U.S. citizens was a popular topic based on the misconception that Mexicans would contaminate American virtues (Vélez-Ibáñez, 2011).

Foreign policy in the United States hinged on expansionist views that held to racist tendencies under Manifest Destiny. Riddled with public opinion, the political landscape about where the border of the United States should be and to what extent the United State should try to make a claim on México's territory became national headline news. The consensus was that controlling México's land would boost trade and the economy, but more important than the border was the issue and major concern of politicians about what to do with the Mexicans. Chief concerns were whether it would be wise to include a population of "mixed blood . . . all the rest pure Indians, a mixed blood equally ignorant and unfit for liberty, impure races" into the nation's racial mix (Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 209).

According to Gutiérrez (1995), throughout the Mexican-American War, many Americans feared the annexation of Mexican territory would create a race problem because of the "acquisition of a debased population who had been . . . manufactured into American citizens" and would negate the potential benefits gained by additional territory. Clearly, the topics of race and citizenship were intertwined in the Mexican debate, as Anglo Americans not only questioned the merits of the Mexican "race" but also the authenticity of their future status as U.S. citizens. Anglo Americans did not understand Mexican culture, nor did they want to because it was so "different" from what they knew, and the idea was something was so inherently wrong with the Mexican character that Mexicans would not assimilate to American customs, regardless of whether they were considered U.S. citizens. This dilemma of assimilation surrounded the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and decisions on how to end the Mexican-American War.

Although Mexicans became citizens of the United States and were granted equal status with all other Americans, their subordinate, inferior status in American society prevailed. Central to the decisions to incorporate a large Mexican population and the effect it would have on demographics and social relations within the Anglo-American culture, the fact remained that Americans wanted only Mexican land. In fact, Gutiérrez (1995) stated that Americans did not want Mexicans as fellow citizens or even subjects, but only the territory, with the hope that the Mexican population would recede or assimilate.

A strong opponent of Mexicans being U.S. citizens was Michigan State Senator Lewis Cass; his remarks were nothing short of racism and were embraced widely in the U.S. government. From the beginning of the U.S. official dealings with Mexican nationals, the arrogance of superiority toward Mexicans influenced the attitude of Mexicans being undesirable in the United State. Despite the fact that Mexicans living in the territories that the United States had gained from México had knowledge of existing systems of agriculture and economies that provided well for the inhabitants of these lands, American politicians refused to look past their racial prejudices and consider the best mode of interaction with Mexican nationals. Gutiérrez (1995) indicated that, even for those Mexicans who "in theory" Americanized themselves, "the bitterness and hatred . . . stimulated by the war . . . intensified Anglo Americans' hostility toward [all] Mexicans" (p. 206). Although Mexican delegates were successful in their campaign to protect the well-being of their former citizens, who were to be "incorporated into the Union of the United States and admitted . . . according to the principles of the Federal

Constitution, to enjoy all the rights of citizens" and given equal condition with all inhabitants of the other territories of the United States, most Anglo-Americans did not differentiate between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals. "Whites assumed Mexicans to be noncitizens, as Whites have treated people of Mexican descent as foreigners ever since, whatever their parentage and wherever their birth" (Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 206). This trend of bias against the Mexican "race" has worsened as the U.S. immigration policy has become more complex and economic factors have changed.

With the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to 1920, the number of Mexicans in the United States tripled as the need for Mexican laborers grew (Spickard, 2007). The reign of Porfirio Díaz, *El Porfiriato,* left many *Ejidatarios,* Mexican farmers, landless and without hope of surviving hunger. At the same time, conditions in the southwestern United States became ideal for a large influx of unskilled labor; large farming companies had developed methods for irrigation of dry southwestern lands and had a need for cheap labor. These factors led to the immigration of approximately 900,000 people of Mexican-origin into the Southwest (Spickard, 2007). However, the racism of the post-Mexican American War era prevailed. Because of the anti-foreign sentiments of World War I and socioeconomic change in the Southwest, John Box, a congressional representative from east Texas, was able to propose legislation in 1923 meant to solve the country's "Mexican Problem" (Ngai, 2004). Clearly, the provisions for equal treatment of naturalized Mexican-origin citizens in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were quickly forgotten, as Mexicans became a racialized underclass. The reaction to this influx of Mexicans was a fear for the future of the racial demographics of the Southwest. Again,

the issue of how to incorporate a large Mexican population into mainstream American society surfaced in American politics.

Immigration Act of 1924: The Birth of Illegals

The 1920s was a notable decade for U.S. immigration policy. During this decade, the U.S. Border Patrol was formed, and the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed, changing the tone of immigration policy (Ngai, 2004). During that time, a new twist was added to the story of Mexican immigration: the concept of an "illegal" immigrant. While the idea of being able to criminalize or legalize immigrants typically applied to European immigrants in the Northeast, understanding this facet of American immigration history is important to appreciate fully the significance of the current "illegal" immigration debate.

The Immigration Act of 1924 began the process of relegating Mexican immigrants to a separate category within U.S. immigration policy. This Act placed new limitations on immigration from Europe and Asia, creating

> a special need for farm labor in California; growers there and in Texas lauded Mexican labor in part because they believed Mexicans would not settle permanently in the United States. . . . Some elected officials sympathized with the idea of restricting Mexican immigration but did not see how, in fairness, Congress could impose quotas on México and not Canada (Ngai, 2004).

Moreover, at this point, Mexicans were legally considered "White," but ironically, they were not included in race-based immigration quotas. The classification of Mexicans as "White" gives the perception that a bit of preferential treatment was given despite the perseverance of racism against Mexican American citizens and Mexican nationals; however misleading this label was, the perpetuation and solidification of many stereotypes about Mexicans persisted because of the labor needs they fulfilled. During

this time of labor need, Mexicans were not even required to "apply for admission at lawfully designated ports of entry" until 1919 (Ngai, 2004). The 1924-Immigration Act also helped to create the concept of the illegal immigrant.

Ngai stated, "[N]numerical restriction created a new class of persons within the national body—illegal aliens—whose inclusion in the nation was at once a social reality and a legal impossibility" (p.12). Stringent quota laws allowed many Asian and European immigrants to enter the United States without proper visas, thereby establishing the concept of an "undocumented" or "illegal" immigrant. However, in 1929, legislation criminalized undocumented immigration and converted deportation from a civil procedure to a criminal offense. Ngai argued,

> In effect, illegal immigrants inherited the worst of both propositions: they were subject to both deportation, under which proceedings they still lacked constitutional protections, and separate criminal prosecution and punishment. Criminal conviction also made future reentry impossible. (Ngai, 2004, p.12)

Thus, the second facet of the Mexican immigration problem was created.

Border tensions were exacerbated as the United States placed greater emphasis on land borders and created the Border Patrol. The strict enforcement of quotas and the creation of "illegal immigrants" facilitated the "emphasis on control of the nation's contiguous land border, which . . . had not existed before. This new articulation of state territoriality reconstructed national borders, and national space in ways that were both highly visible and problematic" (Ngai, 2004, p.15).

Although Mexican lands officially came into U.S. jurisdiction in 1845, when Texas was annexed to the United States, the U.S. government did not seek to police the border officially until May of 1924, nearly 60 years after expansion into the Southwest

(Lytle-Hernández, 2010). Before the introduction of the Border Patrol, people on both sides of the boundary travelled freely back and forth for work, trade, and social life. However, patrol officers made it their duty to police Mexicans in the border region using violence and intimidation in a similar fashion to the Texas Rangers (Lytle-Hernández, 2010).

Historical accounts of Border Patrol brutality serve as testimonies to anti-immigrant sentiments of the past, which are the foundations of the rhetoric of the current immigration debate. According to Lytle-Hernández (2010), many early Border Patrol officers were actually quite skilled in tracking, so that policing the border for undocumented immigrants became a sport of tracking prey. For instance, an experienced officer would often jokingly tell recruits "Hmmm . . . [this track belongs to] a Mexican male; about 5'5" to 5' 8"; dark brown hair; brown eyes; dark complexion; wearing huaraches" (Lytle-Hernández, 2010, p. 49). This stereotype unfortunately did not stop with jokes, but many times ended in the wrongful deportation of U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry.

Changes to immigration policy focused on deportation and possession of documentation for legal status. The criminalization of immigrants who entered without authorization became increasingly complex as "the system shifted to a different, more abstract register, which privileged formal status over all else" (Ngai, 2004, p. 91). The quota system created a class of unauthorized immigrants, making policy enforcement all the more difficult because it depended on the possession of proper documentation.

Nonetheless, undocumented immigrants still found ways to come into the United States and were able to fit into immigrant societies without much notice. Undocumented immigrants settled in American communities, married American citizens or legal residents, and parented young American nationals. However, they were still subject to the laws of deportation that gained importance with the creation of the "illegal" category, which became an emphasis after documentation was the criterion for status. Ngai (2004) wrote that opponents to the common use of deportation claimed that it was unjust in situations in which it separated families or created other difficulties that did not align with the offense committed. This criticism resulted in efforts to reform deportation policy in the 1930s so that administrators would have greater discretion in deportation, and Just as restriction and deportation 'made' illegal aliens, administrative discretion 'unmade' illegal aliens (Ngai, 2004). Clearly, it is difficult to find a strict standard in the history of U.S. immigration policy concerning what constitutes a legal or an illegal alien. For quite some time, Mexicans were more legal aliens than many European or Asian groups because they were not subject to race quotas because they were classified as white. Therefore, there was less of a need for them to come without proper documentation.

Discrepancies and difficulties arose in identifying individual visa numbers based on quota limits that varied for different racial groups; for example, an individual with visa number *N*, the quota limit number, would be legal while the person with *N*+1 was illegal. However, for another ethnicity, that same *N*+1 could be within the legal and

authorized group (Ngai, 2004). All these factors added to the confusion of what it meant to be a legal immigrant.

The creation of the "illegal" alien status and the increase of deportations fostered a view among the American people that an undocumented immigrant was the "least desirable alien," thus making national sovereignty and territoriality the catalyst for immigration policy without regard to the social factors driving immigration (Ngai, 2004). The ideology and attitude this system created against Mexicans was prejudiced in the Southwest, and the goal of the ideology was to secure borders from outside races. Weak policy enforcement occurred at the Mexican border, and Mexicans were levied an entry tax and became "illegal" if they overstayed their allotted time. Thus, even though the quota system was largely reserved for eastern Europeans and Asians, it created a means for Mexicans to lose their legal status in the United States, which added them to the ambiguous category of potential illegal immigrants. Eventually, although the concept of an illegal, undocumented alien originated with populations subject to quota laws in the 1920s, Mexicans became associated with undocumented entry:

> As numerical restriction assumed primacy in immigration policy, its enforcement aspects—inspection procedures, deportation, the Border Patrol, criminal prosecution, and irregular categories of immigration—created many thousands of illegal Mexican immigrants. The undocumented Mexican laborer who crossed the border to work in the burgeoning industry of commercial agriculture emerged as the prototypical illegal alien. (Ngai, 2004, p. 71)

The eventual criminalization of many Mexican immigrants, usually laborers and the racism that prevailed throughout the U.S. interactions with México influenced and helped to shape U.S. immigration policy and debate for the remainder of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Although it is quite evident that problems regarding the U.S.

immigration system did not begin with Mexicans, this group moved to the forefront of debate after the abatement of the previous century's influx of Asian and European immigrants. The new conceptualizations of criminalization and deportation and a greater sense of the need for border security of the 1920s came to a culmination in the 1930s with the Great Repatriation.

History Repeats Itself: The Mexican Repatriation of the 1930s

For many North Americans, the term *repatriation* is as foreign as the people whom it serves to remove. History books do not mention the forced removal of approximately half million or more people of Mexican ancestry during the Great Depression; in addition to noncitizens, many of these exiles were U.S. citizens. North Americans continue to be oblivious of this historical fact given the number of repatriates were about tenfold the number of persons of Japanese ancestry who were interned by the U.S. government during World War II. Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge and awareness of the repatriation of Mexicans is consistent with the general invisibility Mexicans live with currently and their deprivation of civil rights throughout much of U.S. history. The state of California most recently acknowledged its involvement in civil rights violations during the repatriation of the 1930s by offering a public apology to those descendants and survivors of that campaign. The U.S. federal government continues to deny its involvement and may never acknowledge that policy's long and enduring effect on Mexican Americans in this country.

During the Great Repatriation of the 1930s, Mexican immigrants were treated as disposable commodity, and became scapegoats for the Depression. Although

immigration records are not adequately documented from that period, about 500,000 people of Mexican-origin moved back to México during the Great Repatriation. It is unknown how many of these individuals were, like Emilia, U.S. Citizens:

> Emilia Castaneda was a U.S. Citizen who lived in Los Angeles in the 1930s. After her mother died in 1935, her father informed Emilia and her siblings that they were being forced to return to México. Emilia remembers, "We cried and cried. I had never been to México. We were leaving everything behind." The Castaneda family went by train to the border where they were directed back to México. When they arrived at her father's former home state of Durango, Emilia was not expecting the conditions of poverty that she would have to adjust to. Their home, unlike her house in Los Angeles, did not have plumbing or running water and had dirt floors. She was forced to drop out of school and work to help her family. Not only had Emilia never been to México, she could not speak Spanish when she arrived because it had been forbidden at her elementary school in the U.S. Emilia Castaneda's story was just one out of thousands (Spickard, 2007 p. 52).

The purpose of the Great Repatriation, enacted under President Herbert Hoover, was to discourage applying for welfare assistance, blamed on foreign labor during the economic strain of the Great Depression. The Depression plunged many Americans into poverty, and their natural scapegoat, especially in the Southwest, was the immigrants, especially those of Mexican-origin. The American reaction was to blame the Mexicans for taking employment opportunities from U.S. citizens, although they failed to realize that many of the Mexican laborers were, in fact, citizens. According to Spickard (2007), "[T]he motive was to cut the numbers of people on the public dole. In 1931 Los Angeles County, estimated that 60,000 people were on public assistance; 6,000 of them were foreign citizens, and most of those were Mexicans," (Spickard, 2007). However, citizenship of Mexicans was not considered in polls for demographers.

The Great Repatriation violated the civil rights of thousands of U.S. citizens of Mexican-origin, who were legally supposed to be protected and given the same and equal rights as all other U.S. citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This repatriation served to blur further the lines of legality in regards to immigration of Mexican people. Some Mexican-origin individuals were certainly given no choice in their return to México and were simply forced to go (Spickard, 2007, Balderrama & Rodríguez, 2006). This forceful departure is now being called *self-deportation*; it is designed to "strongly" encourage Mexican families to return to México willingly with their U.S.-citizen children through the development of draconian state laws.

Balderrama and Rodríguez (2006) documented the historical events surrounding the repatriation and concisely summarized the campaign:

> Local agencies, saddled with mounting relief and unemployment problems, used a variety of methods to rid themselves of "Mexicans": persuasion, coaxing, incentive, and unauthorized coercion. Special railroad trains were made available, with fare at least to the Mexican border prepaid; and people were often rounded up by local agencies to fill carloads of human cargo. In an atmosphere of pressing emergency, little if any time was spent on determining whether the methods infringed upon the rights of citizens. (p. 5).

To assist in the round up, police conducted raids of public places, including the church La Placita on Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles, where persons of Mexican ancestry were known to frequent were targeted areas by police. The people rounded up were often herded onto trains and buses or driven by social workers to the border. This was true for citizens by birth and those who had lawfully naturalized to become citizens. Immigration and nationality law, which is well-known for its protection of vulnerable people who are law-abiding citizens, was never considered during these round-ups; Mexican-origin

people were exiled from the country no matter what their conduct or their status as citizens.

Repatriation of unwanted immigrants was not a new phenomenon. All nations have exercised their legal prerogative to rid themselves of "undesirable aliens" whenever action suits an avowed purpose (Balderrama & Rodríguez, 2006). Although *repatriation* is the term often used to refer to the campaign that removed hundreds of thousands of persons of Mexican ancestry from the United States in the 1930s, it is not entirely accurate. Federal, state, and local governments worked together to remove many U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry involuntarily; many of them were born in the United States. These citizens cannot be said to have been "repatriated" to their native land. Approximately 60 percent of the persons of Mexican ancestry removed to México in the 1930s were U.S. citizens, many of them children who were effectively deported to México when their immigrant parents were sent there (Balderrama and Rodríguez, 2006).

Discussion of Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression, although standard fare in introductory Chicana/o studies courses, is entirely absent from the national consciousness, nor has it been analyzed in much detail in legal discourse. It is at most a footnote in most immigration histories and, for the most part, is ignored in immigration law scholarship (Balderrama and Rodríguez, 2006). The repatriation, however, deserves sustained attention because of the effect it has had on Mexican American civil rights in the United States, as well as its general lessons about the rights of minorities in times of national crisis and because history is repeating itself. States across the nation have implemented draconian laws designed to repatriate thousands of

Mexican-origin people again without identifying who is a U.S. citizen and who is a noncitizen.

Currently, the practice engaged in by state and local governments, with the advice and support of the federal government is reminiscent of the repatriation of the 1930's. The need to create fear in the Mexican immigrant community and economic hardship by creating draconian state laws, like SB 1070 in Arizona, HB 56 in Alabama, and HB 87 in Georgia, as well as laws introduced in other states like Utah and North Carolina. The idea is to create a wave of "self-deportation" and force Mexican immigrants to leave despite the fact many have U.S.-citizen children. This movement should be classified as a form of "ethnic cleansing," a phrase that entered the international lexicon during the Holocaust. Use of this phrase is not meant to suggest that genocide of persons of Mexican ancestry occurred in the 1930s or is happening currently. Rather, it was and is a forced removal of a racial minority from this country.

Long-Term Effects of the Repatriation

The Mexican-repatriation campaign negatively affected the views of Mexican Americans of government in the United States. This distrust of government remains to this day, with many Latinos sharing deep fear of law enforcement and immigration authorities. The long and notorious history of mistreatment of persons of Mexican ancestry has forged a deeply negative view of immigration authorities in the minds of many Latinos (Balderrama and Rodríguez, 2006).

Furthermore, by placing the status of all persons of Mexican ancestry in the United States into question, it served to create strong shame and ultimate rejection of

"being Mexican" for those lucky enough to pass as "White." Repatriation contributed to efforts by many Mexican Americans to adopt a "White" identity and assimilate into the mainstream at any cost (Johnson, 2005). Acuña (1995), analyzed efforts by Mexican Americans in pre-1960s Los Angeles to deny Mexican ancestry, pass as "Spanish," and be anything but Mexican. In the Southern California of the 1940s and 1950s, Mexican Americans embraced their Spanish heritage; ate at Spanish, not Mexican, restaurants; and attempted to adopt a White identity. Through such ploys, they tried to avoid the discrimination suffered by persons of Mexican ancestry in Los Angeles and much of the Southwest.

With the removal of about one million persons of Mexican ancestry pre-1960s, the nation lost roughly one third of its entire Mexican population. This reduction delayed for decades the full emergence of the Latino community as a political, economic, and social force in the United States (Johnson, 2005). Consequently, repatriation effectively stifled the socioeconomic development of Mexican colonials in the United States. The community had to await the coming of age of a new generation unencumbered by the stifling experience of a decade of betrayal before recovering from the ordeal (Balderrama & Rodríguez, 2006). That wait may help to explain why the "Chicano movement" did not occur until 25 years after the end of the 1930's repatriation decade.

According to the School of Law, University of California–Davis, legally, the repatriation program violated the rights of persons of Mexican ancestry in many ways. Violations of the U.S. Constitution, as well as international law, are obvious. Due process, equal protection, and the Fourth Amendment rights of persons stopped, detained,

and deported from the United States were sacrificed (Johnson, 2005). Through efforts to enforce the immigration laws, state and local governments infringed on the federal immigration power. However, the deportation campaign of the 1930s is only part of a long history of enforcement of immigration laws in violation of the civil rights of persons of Mexican ancestry in the United States (Johnson, 2005).

For example, the mass deportation of Mexican immigrants and Mexican American citizens in 1954 in a massive operation known as *Operation Wetback* resembled the Repatriation in important respects, with hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent rounded up and deported (García, 1980). Furthermore, the militarization of the border that began in the 1990s has resulted in the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of people, almost all of Mexican ancestry; however, it has not decreased the undocumented immigrant population in the United States, which, by most estimates, was close to 10 million by 2005 (Johnson, 2005).

In addition, the mass round up of persons of Mexican ancestry in Chandler, a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona, in July 1997, demonstrated that incidents like the repatriation are not simply ancient history. In the Chandler Roundup, local police, with the assistance of the U.S. Border Patrol, stopped, questioned, and detained persons of Mexican ancestry—including many U.S. citizens—in an effort to rid the area of undocumented immigrants. Police staked out public places believed to be frequented by undocumented immigrants and questioned people who spoke Spanish and fit a crude profile of the undocumented immigrant (Navarrette, 2011). These incidents further reveal how persons of Mexican ancestry continue to be stereotyped as foreigners, aliens,

criminals, and undesirables in the United States who are presumptively subject to the immigration laws. Navarrette further stated that, although a political outcry followed, leading to various investigations of Sheriff Joe Arapaio's tactics and local police racial profiling approaches, the promise by local officials not to engage in similar operations in the future did not last long and raids in Gilbert soon followed. Less publicized events like that in Chandler occur with grim regularity. For example, a controversy in the Los Angeles area erupted in 2004 with several immigration raids of public places in Mexican immigrant and Mexican American communities, striking fear in the hearts of many persons of Mexican ancestry (Passel, 2011).

Mexican-origin people regularly claim that immigration and other law enforcement officers engage in unlawful racial discrimination. Indeed, racial profiling has been sanctioned to a certain degree in immigration enforcement through draconian state laws. A 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce (1975)*, approved the kind of racial profiling contemplated by Arizona's new immigration law, according to law professors Gabriel Chin and Kevin Johnson (2010). The Supreme Court found that the immigration stop in question violated the Fourth Amendment rights. Border Patrol officers relied exclusively on "the apparent Mexican ancestry" of the occupants of an automobile. The Court, however, further stated, "The likelihood that any given person of Mexican ancestry is an alien is high enough to make Mexican appearance a relevant factor" in an immigration stop, indicating that physical descriptors can again be used as a means of identifying who is legal (United States v. Brignoni-Ponce, 1975).

The lengthy history of anti-Mexican immigration enforcement policies and practices indicates the need for the United States to reconsider its border policies to reduce racial discrimination and human rights abuses, as well as to ensure that the immigration laws had better comport with the social, political, and economic pressures for migration from México. Despite the wealth of historical research on the Great Depression, decades passed before any significant attention was paid to the 1930s Repatriation. Only in the last few years has Latino political power grown to a point that political leaders have had the support to investigate fully this sad episode in U.S. history (Johnson, 2005).

Currently, the federal government's reaction to the events of September 11, 2001, promises to entrench a deep and enduring effect on the civil rights of U.S. citizens. Recent years have seen record levels of deportations, with 80-90% of those deported from México and Central America for immigration violations wholly unrelated to terrorism (Johnson, 2005). President Obama proudly announced that, under his leadership, more than 500,000 individuals and families have been deported. These children have been exiled from their own country in violation of civil rights and justice (Passel, 2011).

Migration: Push-Pull Factors

The national housing bust of the late 2000s created an economic crisis such as had not been seen in years. U.S. households lost on average nearly $5,800 in income because of reduced economic growth during the acute stage of the financial crisis from September 2008 through the end of 2009.

> The United States pulled back from a financial market meltdown and economic collapse in late 2008 and early 2009 but just barely. Not until we came to the edge of catastrophe were decisive actions taken to address problems that had been building in financial markets for years. By then it was too late to avert a severe recession accompanied by massive job losses, skyrocketing unemployment, lower wages, and a growing number of American families at risk of foreclosure and poverty (Swagel, 2009).

Costs to the federal government because of its interventions to mitigate the financial crisis amounted to $2,050 on average for each U.S. household. In addition, the combined peak loss from declining stock and home values totaled nearly $100,000 on average per U.S. household during the July 2008 to March 2009 period. Economics and events abroad created an economic bust that was unforeseen by many and escalated rather quickly; these economic push-pull factors have always influenced immigration (Swagel, 2009).

The past half-century, with spiking job losses and collapsing economies around the world, particularly in México, and the rapidly growing economic gaps between the booming developed world and the underdeveloped world have brought great waves of new faces—brown faces—to places that had never seen them before. For the United States, the new wave was overwhelmingly Mexican. The Maquiladora industries that were once seen as México's great economic hope eventually pulled out and moved to Asia, leaving thousands without work. *It* takes an average of 55 days to start a business in México, compared with eight in Singapore and nine in Turkey. It takes 74 days to register a property in México but only 12 in the United States. México's corporate tax rate of 34% is twice that of China. México has not failed to modernize its export industries, but it has lost ground to China, which has changed more rapidly and more

broadly, particularly in educating knowledge workers. In short, México lost many jobs to China. The only way for México to thrive is with a strategy of reform that will enable it to beat China (Friedman, 2006).

For Mexicans and the United States, in a process that segued smoothly and almost unnoticed from the World War II era bracero program to a system of increasingly organized illegal immigration, the growing gap between the booming post-War U.S. economy and the lagging pre-industrial Mexican agrarian economy influenced a new wave of Mexicans to immigrate to California and the Southwest. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of Mexican immigrants rose from 760,000 to 12.7 million (Germano, 2009). In the Mexican countryside, there are towns where more than half the people have left to look for work in the United States. To understand Mexican immigration, scholars must understand towns like these.

The problem is not immigration but the lack of opportunities in México. The people who come to the United States are not necessarily professionals, although a few leave México. The vast majority of immigrants come from the peasant agrarian communities in rural towns. According to Alejo, a former migrant who was interviewed in Michoacán in Germano's movie *The Other Side of Immigration* (2009); "People of the town, the neighbors, see that those who left and came back have nice clothing, trucks or cars and they begin to think that it can be obtained easily, but they don't realize the long 15-16 hour days, seven days a week it takes to get those things." According to Germano, the returning people create an unrealistic fantasy about working in the United States. In México, the average day's pay is $12.00; in the United States, the same worker can make

$50-$80 a day as a laborer. The general belief is that, in the United States, a person can be anything he or she wants to be because of the vast opportunities and resources. For many people in México, migrating is unavoidable: If they do not migrate, their families will starve and maybe even perish.

The rural economies of México have taken an immense hit; Michoacán used to be the second biggest producer of pork in the nation. It was an important source of economy for many families, who had their own pig farms. Anyone with money and resources was involved in pig farming and would have anywhere from 20-30 workers; currently, the pig farmer is outdated. Corn and beans were another source of income in Michoacán; grain farmers were able to make a living, and it was normal for a family to plant an acre or two of corn and beans to sell on the market at a profit (Germano, 2009). Currently, the people go to the store to buy corn and beans because it is much cheaper to buy imported grains than to grow them. Large quantities of imported grain, beans, and corn depleted the grain economy of México and, in particular, in Michoacán. Strawberries are another crop that has been killed by importation from the United States. Bulk buyers now buy imported strawberries because they can buy them at a cheaper price. These agrarian economies have been diminished and depleted by competition from U.S. farmers who have the technology and government support to produce mass quantities for exportation (Germano, 2009).

From the beginning of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the local farmers protested this agreement. They forecasted it would obliterate agrarian grain economies and pork farming, which were eventually depleted by

competition from the United States. NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), which was in effect between 1994 and 2008, served to increase immigration and depleted or annihilated the agrarian economies of rural México (Germano, 2009). Unlike the European Community, on which NAFTA was partly modeled, it made no provisions for the movement of labor, despite the fact that it was likely to have a major effect on workers. One of its original selling points was that, by creating more economic opportunities south of the border, it would reduce the pressure to emigrate. The result was almost precisely the opposite.

Allowing the import of cheap agricultural products—corn, beans, strawberries, and pork in particular—from highly efficient U.S. farms, drove tens of thousands of Mexicans off their unproductive, barren lands to join the stream of migrants heading north (Germano, 2009). Many became part of the million-plus workforce at the maquiladoras, which eventually closed down and moved to China, creating another unemployment crisis that crowded the border cities and the hovels around them with a multitude of desperate people. Many opted to follow the call of the north to join relatives and friends in the United States as an alternative to letting their families starve.

Anti-Immigrant Blocks and Politics of Education

About the same time NAFTA was first enacted in the mid-1990s, the American public's attitudes and rhetoric in TV news, newspapers, radio stations, and political platforms became more anti-immigrant. This attitude began in education and quickly spread into all aspects of life for the *Estadounidenses*. The rhetoric began with the outcry against paying for education of migrant children, with the chief complaint being that tax

money was being used to educate illegals, without those illegals, the schools would not be crowded, and the other children would not be held back while teachers focused on immigrants who came to school not even speaking English (Vélez-Ibañez, 2011).

Vélez-Ibañez (2011) explained that history follows a pattern in the integrated economy. When a major economic downturn occurs, hysteria against Mexican labor begins. Mexicans are then seen as commodities to be bought and sold but also as a danger. In 1994, California was just coming out of a major recession that was blamed on Mexican immigrants: They depleted state resources and used California tax dollars to get their "Spanish-only" children educated. A result of this recession and anti-immigrant rhetoric, California enacted Proposition 187, an initiative that would have denied virtually all public services, including schooling and higher education, to illegal immigrants and their children. It was the beginning of state draconian laws designed to instill fear in the immigrant community. The laws were so harsh that every public employee—teacher, physician, and social worker—would be required to report all illegal aliens to the head of his or her agency, to the attorney general, and to immigration authorities (Nevins, 2010).

The father of this anti-immigrant initiative was Harry Nelson, the former U.S. immigration commissioner, at the time a paid adviser to FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform). Proposition 187 was quickly targeted by Hispanic community leaders as part of the racist agenda of the Pioneer Fund, which quickly announced it was neutral on political and social issues and avoided grantees with social agendas to push. However, the Pioneer Fund had given the Federation for American Immigration Reform

(FAIR) more than $1 million in the previous decade. In the days following, FAIR withdrew its funding to support Proposition 187 and went out of its way to prove that neither it nor Pioneer were racist. Proposition 187, nonetheless, passed with 59% of the vote. Although a federal judge quickly blocked it, the campaign to pass it had long-lasting consequences, particularly for Gov. Pete Wilson and the California Republican Party (Nevins, 2010). Prop 187 opened a path for other states to follow in creating draconian state laws with the intent of instilling such fear that it would create a "self-deportation" of thousands of people. Currently, this tactic has been successful in getting Mexicans to repatriate to México.

The Politics of Immigration: Uncertainty and Fear

In 2007, the defeat of comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level became the springboard for state and local governments to produce their own laws and regulations and gave birth to accusations ICE; the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency was racially profiling Latinos in Arizona simply by their Latino appearance. There was no sense to this chaotic system of handling unauthorized workers. It is now well documented that instilling fear and not protecting the rights of U.S.-citizen children born to unauthorized workers has been very successful in helping to repatriate hundreds of Mexican immigrants, who either chose to return to México willingly or chose to bypass the traditional immigrant states and move into the Midwest and Southeast, but the backlash followed them. The continuous backlash enhanced serious economic hardships for many families, who struggled to meet their basic survival needs. Many resorted to occupying "backhouses"—shed or garages—offered by friends and

family members; many families were forced to live three or four families to a room (Vélez-Ibáñez, 2011).

On May 29, 2010, thousands of people from around the nation marched against Arizona's SB1070 Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act and filled the streets of downtown Phoenix. Nearly 200,000 people gathered to denounce SB 1070 as racist (ACLU, 2012). The streets were packed from curb to curb for over 3 miles as demonstrators made their way along the 6-mile route that began at Steele Indian School Park, snaked its way through downtown and ended at the state capitol building. Despite the massive protests, the bill was passed in July 2010. Many Mexican families did not wait around to see whether it would be repealed; they packed and left, many to return to México and others to try their luck in other states (Ovando, 2011). After SB 1070 passed in 2010, two dozen copycat bills were introduced in state legislatures across the country; five passed in Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Utah. The ACLU and a coalition of civil rights organizations have filed lawsuits in all six states.

Alabama's anti-immigrant legislation, HB 56 Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, invoked inhumanity reminiscent of the Jim Crow South. The police state it created was equally cruel. Children would have been denied admission to public schools without proof of their citizenship, and schools would have turned into enforcement operations despite protests of teachers and school administrators who do not want the role of policing instead of educating. Mexican people across the nation, as previously mentioned, ran the risk of having their families broken apart, and for many, it was a risk they were not willing to take. Alabama, Georgia, and Arizona

instilled fear in immigrants. These state laws were designed to severely punish good Samaritans, people of conscience who helped or harbored undocumented workers in addition to U.S. citizen children who have unauthorized parents (ACLU, 2012).

The U.S. immigration system is broken, but it is not the nation's job to terrorize, intimidate, and criminalize families. The nation's core values are in jeopardy because its immigration policy is inconsistent with the national moral fiber. Much about the nation's immigration practices echoes the Repatriation of the 1930s. The immigration crisis cannot be separated from the current economic crisis gripping the nation or other workers around the world. In addition, many U.S. citizens have bought into the rhetoric of the Republican legislative agenda that this law would help provide jobs for workers born in this country. This dogma was nothing more than an attempt to divide the working class. All signs demonstrated that the capitalist unemployment crisis is here to stay and no amount of deportations or fear mongering will provide jobs (McCullough, 2011).

Modern Attitudes toward Mexican Immigrants

Currently, Mexican immigrants suffer from various discriminatory policies in the political, social, and cultural spheres. Anti-Mexican sentiments among many Americans have also risen sharply in recent years. Governmental attempts to build a wall along the border of México in 2006, the banning of ethnic studies in Tucson Arizona in 2011, and most recently, the banning of Mexican American books in the state of Arizona are clear examples of these. General surveys on this subject can be found in the research works of González (2002), Telles and Ortíz (2008), Chacón and Davis (2006), Chávez (2008), and García (2009), among others. These works discuss the historical role of Latino

immigrants, especially coming from México, and the necessity of cultural awareness in dealing with immigrants and their children. To improve the situation for Latino immigrants and their relationship with the rest of America, it is important \to raise collective cultural awareness and to develop new relationships based on equality and mutual understanding.

For several important reasons, the current plight of Latino immigrants should be studied and better understood. Latino immigrants have had a tension-filled relationship with mainstream America, unlike any other ethnic group in history. This relationship, since America conquered the Mexican territories in the 19th century, has shaped the social and economic position of Latinos in the United States. Latinos are currently the largest minority in America, and starkly different standards of living on the two sides of the 2,000-mile border between these two countries have made Mexican immigration to the United States very attractive but also exceedingly painful because of frequent Border Patrol brutality (Bacon, 2008). The continuous Mexican immigration and the competition for low-skilled jobs have also shaped American attitudes toward Mexicans and the subsequent self-perception of Mexicans (Telles & Ortíz, 2008). For example, according to national estimates, 30% of Mexican adults and 50% of Mexican youths 18–24 years old experience unfair treatment on a daily basis because of their ethnicity (Pérez, Fortuna, & Alegria, 2008). Only by rationally studying and understanding, this complicated relationship between Americans and Mexican immigrants can a better future based on mutual understanding and equality result.

To understand the experience of Latinos and Latino immigrants in the United States, it is important to realize that these immigrants have historically played a pivotal role in the U.S. economy and social affairs. As González (2002) indicated, in the case of Mexican Americans, the immigrants and their children for many decades have been a part of the U.S. economic system and have been improving their economic status by trying to integrate into the American mainstream. However, González also pointed out that Mexican Americans have not been able to catch up economically with non-Hispanic Whites primarily for two reasons: their immigrant status and their relatively low levels of education. The two problems overlap because Mexican Americans' immigrant status prevents them from having the same level of education as non-Hispanic Whites have, and because of their low levels of education, Mexican Americans suffer from higher rates of poverty and unemployment and lower levels of annual incomes (González, 2000).

The low levels of economic and educational status of Mexican Americans, coupled with the rapid growth of the Mexican American population, contribute to their overall health. As De La Torre and Estrada (2001) argued, in addition to economic factors, cultural and linguistic factors contribute to Mexican Americans' difficulties in accessing the American health-care system. De La Torre and Estrada showed a clear link between Mexican Americans' sociodemographic conditions, such as their immigrant status and the lack of job opportunities, and their overall health problems. Their political and social conditions contribute, for example, to greater substance abuse, AIDS, and other health problems, some of which are rooted in cultural and linguistic boundaries Mexican Americans experience in the United States.

Cultural perceptions of Mexican Americans are especially important because, very often, various populist politicians and social scientists, who base their anti-immigration views on anecdotal evidence rather than empirical and culturally sensitive knowledge, have accused Mexican Americans and particularly Mexican immigrants of being unassimilable and low-quality labor. One of these social scientists was the late Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, who argued that Mexicans pose a serious threat to the U.S. national unity and that the large Mexican American presence in the southern part of the country has blurred "the border between México and America" (Huntington, 2004, p.139). Huntington also indicated, "Mexicans and their progeny have not assimilated into American society as other immigrants did in the past and as many other immigrants are doing now" (p. 145). However, what Huntington perpetuated was sheer fear mongering, not grounded in serious empirically based studies. As other studies have shown, Mexican Americans and other Hispanics are similar to non-Hispanic immigrant groups in representing the American labor force, and second- and third-generation Hispanic immigrants are fluent in English, although most of them are bilingual. Thus, the "fear of huge numbers of Spanish-speaking children and grandchildren of Mexican immigrants Balkanizing [the] American [language] linguistically and displacing the English language, clearly represents an imagined disaster, not a realistic future" (Katz, Stern, & Fader, 2007, p. 175).

Despite such weak arguments by Huntington (2004) and others, such views are widespread and negatively influence relations between Latino immigrants and European Americans. Partly because of the power of such views and popular cultural perceptions,

Mexican Americans are sometimes classified along racial, ethnic, and gender lines. In a study of Mexican Americana in California, Vásquez (2010) showed current third-generation Mexican Americans are racialized in a peculiar way. Vásquez used the term *flexible ethnicity*, meaning the ability to be considered an 'insider in different racial/ethnic communities, to describe how Mexican American women and men are racialized. Vásquez argued that women and light-skinned men are afforded more flexible ethnicity than men and dark-skinned individuals because women are eroticized whereas men are viewed as a threat to safety. Vásquez wrote, "The gendered stereotypes to which Mexican Americans are subjected have major implications for their structural assimilation; men, figured as violent gangsters, encounter a more rigid barrier to mainstream acceptance than women, who are typecast as exotic" (p. 47). In reality, Mexican American men are no more a threat and Mexican-American women are no more exotic than non-Hispanic men and women.

Popular anti-Mexican sentiments, as Jimenez (2007) showed, also influence the Mexican American self-image and the relationship between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants and serves as a decisive factor in Mexican immigrants' assessments of the costs and benefits of immigration. For example, stereotypes about Mexican immigrants influence the status of Mexican American citizens, and this generalized negative attitude directed against both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants causes tensions between the two groups because the former views the latter as a destabilizing force to an established social order. The theory of cultural affinity, which refers to amicable relations between different Mexican groups because of their shared

culture and ethnicity, is undermined in this case. The nativist feelings directed against Mexican groups also leads Mexican Americans to see immigration as an increasingly costly enterprise. However, Jimenez also argued that "an ideology of multiculturalism and its accompanying value of diversity lead Mexican-Americans to see substantial benefits accruing to the large Mexican-immigrant population, particularly in politics, the labor market, and popular culture" (p. 599). Greater emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity helps Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants better integrate into the American society. This should be the guiding principle for those interested in building a better relationship with Mexican Americans and immigrants: a relationship based on equality and mutual understanding.

Many of the current problems involving Mexican Americans are rooted in the historical relationship Mexican Americans have had with the rest of America. Because of this complicated historical relationship, many Mexican Americans grow up in a tri-cultural world: as American, as Mexican, and as Mexican American (Orozco, 2009). They are Mexican because of their cultural and ethnic ties to native México; they are American because of their experience of living in the United States; and, they are Mexican American because they have molded into a mixed culture of Mexicans and Americans. It was within the context of this tri-cultural Mexican American experience that the Mexican civil rights movements have emerged at different moments of U.S. history. The oldest of these was the LUCAC (League of Latin American Citizens) established in 1929 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The founding members of the League wrote in their constitution that their purpose was to develop within the members of our

race the best, purest, and perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States (Orozco, 2009). They also stated that they intended to "eradicate from our body politic all intents and tendencies to establish discrimination among our fellow-citizens on account of race, religion or social position as being contrary to the true spirit of Democracy, our Constitution and Laws" (Orozco, 2009, p. 2). LUCAC members found inspiration in the U.S. Constitution, and they aspired to be American citizens while retaining their Mexican cultural identity.

Although Mexican Americans are generally viewed as an ethnic group, racialization plays an important role in defining the Mexican American identity in American society. Racialization is the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group (Tellez & Ortíz, 2008). A related term in understanding racialization is racial formation, which is the "process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (Orozco, 2009, p. 10). "Although Mexican-Americans are often referred to as an ethnic group and not as a race," as Telles and Ortíz (2008) noted, "[T]hey were referred to as the latter in earlier times and arguably continue to be referred to and treated as such in societal interactions today. The ethnic boundaries between Mexican-Americans and the mainstream may thus persist largely because of race" (p. 24).

This kind of blurring of boundaries has certainly been the case with Hispanic Americans because various social boundaries and cultures are interdependent. For example, an employer or an educator may treat an employee or a student in different

ways based on the latter's ethnicity and race so that these human groups are sorted into different layers of the social hierarchy. Such discriminatory treatment racializes the ethnic group and hardens the ethnic boundary; In addition, the group's actual or perceived modal socioeconomic status is also often associated with its alleged intelligence, aspirations and abilities, which further racializes ethnic group boundaries (Telles and Ortíz (2008). Because of this persistent racialization of ethnic groups such as Mexican-Americans and other Latinos, some scholars developed a theory of internal colonialism to describe Anglo-American treatment of Mexican Americans (Telles & Ortíz, 2008, pp. 25–29).

Racialization has also affected the judicial treatment of Mexican-Americans throughout history, as García (2009) showed. In the pre-Civil Rights era, the racial status of Mexican-Americans was not clear. They were legally classified as White, but were treated socially as people of color. As García argued, this Mexican-American position "'in-between' white and black provided the foundation for rampant discrimination and exclusion of people of Mexican descent" (p. 3). The Black–White binary of the American civil rights movements has complicated and distorted the history of other minority groups, such as Mexican Americans. Although the law provided equal protection for all Whites, Mexican Americans were subjected to de facto discrimination based on their culture, ethnicity, traditions, language, and racial prejudices.

During the Civil Rights era, advocates of civil liberties and those Americans who felt guilt over the history of slavery accorded much funding for championing the rights of African-Americans; however, there was no corresponding attempt by these White civil

libertarians to defend the rights of Mexican Americans. As a result, as García (2009) pointed out, "[T]he marginalization of the Mexicans who remained in the territory was seen as a consequence of their inability to adjust to a new society, rather than a blatant effort by government officials and white citizens to dispossess them of land and political power" (p. 10). Many improvements have been made in the treatment of the Mexican American minority groups since then, but this troubled history continues to influence current affairs in relations between European Americans and the Hispanic population in America.

Extensive literature is available on the status of Latinos in America. In *Communities without Borders*, Bacon (2006) recounted the tale of Hispanic immigrants in the United States through photography. Through vivid portraits, Bacon told the stories of immigration, migration, adaptation, and survival mechanisms immigrants and their children used. He also presented the voices of many immigrants. The stories he collected offered insight into the way Latino immigrants and their children struggle for economic means, social adaptation, and shared identities. The stories also conveyed the horrors of crossing over borders or ending up in a new environment, sometimes with a hostile native population, and what it means to be neglected, marginalized, and dehumanized. This same scenario of economic struggle, social adaptation and even neglect could be relived during the migration south to México.

Guskin and Wilson (2007) offered many answers to questions about the current immigration situation. The authors addressed a range of questions, including questions about who the immigrants are, why they emigrate, and whether they hurt the economy or

weaken the identity of the United States. Rather than engaging in empty rhetoric, the authors presented facts, statistics, and answers based on logical reasoning. In clearly stated answers, the authors dispelled myths and biases in the anti-immigration rhetoric, exposing the history of unjust deportations, oppression, discrimination, and racism. Along with Chomsky (2007), Guskin and Wilson debunked all the myths and misconceptions about immigration issues in the United States. They presented a compelling case for opening the borders to facilitate the free movement of people. The following are some potential benefits open borders could provide America, according to Guskin and Wilson (2007, pp. 139–140):

- Save billions in tax dollars by reducing bureaucracy and ending immigration enforcement;
- Increase tax revenue by allowing more immigrants to work legally;
- Raise wages and improve working conditions by encouraging labor organizing;
- Boost the travel industry by allowing people to come and go as often as they want;
- Reduce violent crime by eliminating the fear that keeps victims from reporting it;
- Improve social and economic stability by allowing families to stay together;
- Eliminate the illegal trade in human trafficking and false documents.

All the above arguments are backed up with data, facts, and logical argumentation.

Likewise, Riley (2008) advocated open borders because, as he argued, "open immigration policy is compatible with free-market conservatism and homeland security" (p. 12). Riley presented numerous facts and arguments showing that Latino immigrants, even low-skilled ones, are an asset rather than a liability for the United States. Riley noted that conservatism is not against open borders and quoted from older conservatives, such as Ronald Reagan, who began to advocate open borders even before the Civil Rights revolution in the 1960s. On the same question, Haugen, Musser, and Lovelace (2010) presented a variety of views, including both supporters and critics of open borders. The Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force presents other perspectives from the governmental level in the report. The authors of the report argued that immigration control is necessary to protect the United States from terrorism as well as from the inflow of unskilled labor that may harm American workers; nevertheless, they also advocated legislative policies for those immigrants who had been living in the United States for many years (Bush, McLarty, & Alden, 2009).

For understanding violence along the U.S.-Mexican border and its history, Lytle-Hernández's (2010) monograph is required reading. Lytle-Hernández recounted the violent beginnings of the border patrol, initially set up on the Texas-México border but eventually extended all the way to the Pacific coast. The author demonstrated how the violence of the border patrol negatively affected those living along the borders. In chronicling the history of the border patrol, Hernández told about numerous instances of vigilante violence and unchecked use of brutal force against Mexicans. Many agents on

the border freely used violence as a form of enforcement while the laws governing their conduct were loosely applied. The border patrolling, Hernández also argued, led to a complex web of racism against migrants, leading to systematic abuse and even massacres of innocent Mexicans. Chacón and Davis (2006) complement Lytle-Hernández (2010), which recounted how the urge to fight "illegal" immigrants led to vigilante violence and racism on the U.S.-México border.

The literature surveyed in this chapter has addressed the subject of this present research in different ways. Some of the works provided general background information about Latinos in America while others were studied more narrowly focused on the lives of undocumented immigrants, with some using demographic data and others interviewing the students themselves. Gaps still exist in the current research.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the experiences of *Los Retornos*, U.S.-citizen students who have been taken to Morelia, Michoacán, by their parents. In this regard, this project hopes to contribute a new understanding of the lives and experiences of U.S.-citizen students with undocumented parents, not only in Michoacán, but also nationwide in México as it adds to the existing literature that has addressed such issues in a few other states.

The literature review was carefully selected to provide a chronological order of historical events to help the reader understand that these agendas against Mexican origin people are not new. It is important to stay informed and it helps to understand why Mexican origin people, unauthorized and authorized, are finally standing up against racist agendas and treatment of Mexican origin people in the United States.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The high number of *Retorno* students and their families returning to Morelia, Michoacán prompted the need for this research to take place in Michoacán. This research topic was analyzed qualitatively because the purpose of this study was to understand the factors which prompted *Retorno* families to return to Morelia, Michoacán, and because "qualitative research in general and phenomenology in particular is concerned with describing and interpreting human phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced them" (Milacci, 2003, p. 2). As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated, "Understanding is the primary goal of qualitative research" (p. 12). To understand why *Retorno* students felt the way they did, one needed to ask them to describe their experiences.

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, "bracketing" assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such, they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of commonly accepted assumptions and conventional wisdom (Creswell, 1998).

Phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from preconceptions (Husserl, 1970). Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives and, therefore, at challenging structural or

normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support, or challenge policy and action (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Then, too, given the limited qualitative research performed on the subject of *Los Retornos* over the past decade, this research genre was appropriate because one of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the research seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas. (Creswell, 2003, p.30). Researchers associate the word phenomenon with the word describes (Groenewald, 2004; Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007). The purpose of phenomenological study is to "describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it" (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006, p. 461). From these data, the researcher can interpret the meaning of the phenomenon, without attempting to solve a problem (Van Manen, 1990).

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena affecting how the actors in a situation perceive *Los Retornos*. In the human sphere, this type of research normally translates into gathering "deep" information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods, such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation, and representing the information from the perspectives of the research participants (Lester, 1999). A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological-based research, including interviews, conversations, participant

observation, action research, focus meetings, and analysis of personal texts (Patton, 1990). For this study, interviews, conversations, and participant observations were used. If there is a general principle involved, it is that of minimum structure and maximum depth, in practice constrained by time and opportunities, to strike a balance between keeping a focus on the research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher (Giorgi, 1985). The time spent with each participant in daily activities, family gatherings, and outdoor cafés provided opportunity for minimum structure and maximum depth. The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy is critical to gaining depth of information, particularly in investigating issues in which the participant has a strong personal stake. I was able to establish rapport and empathy by spending unstructured time with participants on a daily basis.

Locating the Research Participants

I arrived in Michoacán with two and a half months left in the school year; school is dismissed for summer until the second week of July in México. I encountered two major obstacles that redirected my recruitment approach: a new *Sexenio* and a national teacher's strike. The *Sexenio* was a variant that affected accessibility to government offices; a *Sexenio* is the popular term for the term limit on the President of México. The president is limited to a single six-year term, and no one who holds the office even on a caretaker basis is permitted to run for or hold the office again. It is one of the country's most important political institutions because it is one of the few significant limitations in México on executive power, which is strong at local, state, and national levels. A new *Sexenio* always extends to state and local offices, and with each new president, most top

government workers are replaced at federal, state, and local offices. Many government offices experience a standstill until the new leaders take office (Jaimes Ruíz, 2013).

The multistate teachers strike broke out after the SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública) announced a major comprehensive education reform for a change. At the heart of the conflict was the "Alliance for Quality Education," a national, constitutional plan to professionalize teachers and hold them accountable for their students' performances. The plan was ratified in May 2012 by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and Elba Esther Gordillo, the leader of the country's 1.6 million-member National Education Workers Union (SNTE), and sent to México's 31 state governments and Federal District for approval (Jaimes Ruíz, 2013). In February 2013, the reform became a federal constitutional law. Tens of thousands of teachers took over the streets, blocked highways, and seized government buildings across México to protest the federal education reform ending teachers' long-time practice of selling their jobs or passing on their jobs as an inheritance to their children.

In Morelia, Michoacán, protesters set up a sprawling tent city near the Secretariat of Education (SEE), which oversees the state's public education system, and took over El Centro (downtown). Teachers and supporters of the strike were bussed into Morelia from surrounding towns and states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. The protesters accused their union leader Elba Esther Gordillo, who recently declared herself the union's leader for life, of striking a deal with Enrique Peña Nieto to retain her grip on power at the expense of decades of hard-fought labor gains. The teachers threatened to strike indefinitely until they received what they wanted. The strike was in effect for seven months and did not

end before it erupted into violence in Michoacán between students from the Normal Teachers School and state police.

I walked around the teacher compound set up looking for teachers willing to be interviewed. I was treated as a foreign reporter who might misrepresent the strike. In a few instances, I heard a small group of teachers saying, "*Pinche Gringa, nomás viene a ver que reporta malo*." (Dumb-ass gringa, she is just here to report the bad.) I turned and addressed the group, introducing myself as Maestra Sanders Quezada de Arizona. The manner in which I introduced myself brought down barriers and deflected open hostility; I showed my Arizona State University (ASU) ID for further verification of who I was. One of the teachers in the group apologized for all of them saying, "! *No! Discúlpenos, maestra; es que no le tenemos confianza a nadie; disculpe por la falta de respeto.*" (Forgive us, teacher; it is just that we cannot trust anybody; we apologize for the lack of respect.) He then agreed to an informal interview if I changed his name. We shook hands on it and began a conversation:

> R: Why are you teachers striking this time?
>
> Maestro Juan Manuel: *Estamos peleando para garantizarles trabajos a nuestros hijos. En toda la historia, los hijos de los carpinteros o hasta taxistas son carpinteros y taxistas. Hasta los hijos de los políticos crecen a ser políticos. ¿Por qué no pueden tener nuestros hijos el mismo derecho?*
>
> (We are fighting to guarantee jobs for our kids. Throughout history, the sons of carpenters or even taxi drivers have become carpenters and taxi drivers. Even politicians' children become politicians. Why shouldn't our children have the same right?)

I asked Maestro Juan Manuel if teachers worried that children would be out of school for months and were the most affected by the strike. He responded, "*Pues por*

una parte sí porque no se sabe cuándo regresaremos y ya tenemos unas semanitas sin escuela pero los niños también aprenden a pelear por sus derechos." (Well, we do worry on one side because we have been striking for a few weeks and kids have been out of school, but the students also learn from these strikes, they learn to fight for their rights.) By September 2012, the strike had turned violent and students had been out of school for five months.

The effect the *Sexenio* and the teachers' strike had on the progress of this project was to bar access to federal government programs like PROBEM (Programa Binacional de Educación para el Migrante), SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública), SEE (Secretaría de Educación Estatal) and schools. For example, I made use of Internet searches and telephonic inquiry to the offices of PROBEM, Instituto Migrante, INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografía), and the school principal and teachers teaching the children in Morelia, Michoacán. Initially, I was granted interviews, only to have them canceled or have no one answer the door. The *Sexenio* played an important role in these cancelations. New government leadership was transitioning and being replaced in these agencies and it is normal for the office to experience a transition and shift, and at times, even vandalism of some sort if there is a "toma" (a takeover) of the offices.

For PROBEM, all records had disappeared. The previous leader did not take responsibility for the disappearance of six years of data, although she claimed authorship rights to some data she supposedly had. Access to records at the SEP was no different; many records are still written manually into ledgers, making gathered data vulnerable if there is a strike or a "toma," a takeover, which literally happens at schools, universities,

and SEP offices. Disgruntled teachers, staff, or students jump walls, cut locks, and take over an office; often ledgers and files are burnt, and vandalism is rampant. Unknown to me, the teachers' strike had already been in motion prior to my arrival, making accessibility to the leaders and important insiders more challenging.

The challenges presented in the field made this project opportunistic in nature, necessitating following new leads during fieldwork through snowballing, taking advantage of the unexpected, and remaining flexible (Patton, 2001). Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Patton, 2001). For this project, snowballing occurred in the small town of Pátzcuaro, located fifteen miles west of Morelia.

I was strolling in what is El Centro on a Saturday morning when I heard two little girls singing in perfect English. I turned and watched them briefly and went up to them to complement their perfect English. Their mother was there, and I struck up a conversation. I introduced myself and asked her if I could conduct an informal interview on the spot. She agreed, we sat down in a patio café, and I proceeded to ask where they had come from. Through casual conversation, I learned they had just returned from California and had been living in Tzintzuntzan for eight months. I explained the scope of the work I was doing and asked if she knew of other family members that would be willing to participate. She excitedly gave me the names of *comadres* (godmothers to the family's children) living in Morelia who would be happy to talk to me and participate. As it turned out, Comadre Alex (name changed to protect participant) lived in a small community in the outskirts east of Morelia and she was willing to let her children

participate. Eventually, through Alex, who became a key insider, I was able to arrange interviews with the school leaders, teachers, and later government officials who were the "gatekeepers." These interviewees offered the primary data for analysis with their informed consent (Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

The phenomenon dictates the method and not vice versa, including even the type of participants chosen (Hycner, 1976). I chose purposive sampling, considered by Seidman (2005) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants. I selected the sample based on my judgment and the purpose of the research. I wanted to recruit and look for those who had experiences relating to the phenomenon of being *Los Retornos* (Seidman, 2005). I requested the purposive sample interviewees to give, at their discretion, the names and contact details of persons based on their immigration arrival status and, enrolled in schools, or contacts in government agencies, which were responsible for the welfare and wellbeing of recent immigrant arrivals. Regardless of these strategies, the most accommodating leaders did, as Rossman & Rallis (2011) cautioned, influence to some extent the course of the research, for example, by steering me to look into their area of choice. For instance, the Tarasca mother I met in the streets in Pátzcuaro led me to the Robles family, who then took me to their school and introduced me to the principal and the children's teachers.

To ensure ethical research, I made use of informed consent (Kvale, 1999). Kvale (1999) also cautioned that deception might be counter-productive. However, not asking the leading (Kvale, 1999) central research questions (given under the next heading) is not regarded as deception. Based on Bailey's (1996, p. 11) recommended items, I developed

a specific informed consent agreement, approved by IRB prior to beginning my fieldwork, to gain participants' acknowledgments of the following:

- Their participation in the research
- The purpose of the research (without stating the central research question)
- The procedures of the research
- The risk and benefits of the research
- The voluntary nature of research participation
- The participants' right to stop participating at any time
- The procedures used to protect confidentiality

Van Manen (1990) further observed that deception might prevent insights, whereas honesty coupled with confidentiality reduces suspicion and promotes sincere responses. The informed consent agreement form explained to participants at the beginning of each interview was a way to reduce concerns and establish trust. Most potential participants signed the agreement, and those who were uncomfortable were not pressured to participate in the study. All who ended up being participants were in agreement with the form's content and signed.

Because Boyd (2001) regarded 2–10 participants as sufficient to reach saturation, and Creswell (2003) recommended "long interviews with up to 10 people" for a phenomenological study, a sample size of seven students between the ages of eight to nineteen years old, three parents, extended family members, three teachers, two school administrators, a government agency representative and two other previous *Retorno* students who had been taken to México and raised there but have since returned to the

United States were selected. The purpose of collecting data from three different kinds of informants is to use a form of triangulation—data triangulation—to contrast the data and validate the data if they yield similar findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Data-collection and informal interviews continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated, that is, when interviewees (participants) introduced no new perspectives on the topic.

Participants

This research project included seven students were between the ages of eight to nineteen years old, three parents, extended family members, three teachers, two school administrators, a government agency representative and two other previous *Retorno* students who had been taken to México and raised there but have since returned to the United States. Participants were identified as having been born and raised in the United States and being English dominant by choice although they spoke Spanish at home. Moreover, in the process of identifying the participants through a snowball effect, it was discovered that the participants and their family members were of mixed nativity. For example, the Robles parents had lived in the United States for fifteen years but the parents were unauthorized, yet their three children were U.S. citizens except for their three month-old baby, who had been born in México. Verification of citizenship was self-reported by the parents who had proudly shown off the children's birth certificates, social security cards, and academic records and confirmed them through positional authority, showing report cards, awards, and teacher notes. Furthermore, this method provided a segue for me to approach the experience of people in organizations (like the school principal, teachers, and PROBEM secretary) through examining personal and

institutional documents, observation, exploring history, and through questionnaires and surveys (Seidman, 2005). At some point in their school endeavors, *Los Retornos* self-reported as English dominant by language of choice although they spoke Spanish at home with their parents. Given that construct, *Los Retornos* can have several meanings. The following were true of all participants: (a) they were English-Spanish speakers who identified themselves as being North American, not Mexican; (b) they had never visited México prior to being taken there by their parents; (c) the youngest participants were all matriculated in a public school in México.

The young adults, Tony and Ed, had jobs using their English skills. Both had failed attempts at passing entrance and exit exams at their local high schools and the university due to language barriers; (d) none of the children had completed a full year of school in México; (e) Mexican school officials did not consider this cohort of students *Los Retornos* but *Gringitos*, immigrants, and SLL (Spanish language learners). However, after three months, the school leaders make the decision to transition and mainstream them as regular students.

Research Site

Michoacán means “the place of the fishermen” in Náhuatl. Michoacán is located 1000 miles south of El Paso, Texas. It is in the west central part of the Mexican Republic. Michoacán was selected as the research because of the high receivership of *Los* Retornos and because Michoacán was a familiar site to the researcher who had previous experience, working in the private and public school sector in Morelia, Michoacán. In 2000, Michoacán had a total population of 3,985,667; the capital,

Morelia, had a population of 619,958. Almost all citizens there speak Spanish as their first language. About 3.5 percent of the population speaks an indigenous (native) language as their first language. According to the 2000 census, the population of persons five years old and older who spoke indigenous languages in the state of Michoacán totaled 121,849. The most common Indigenous languages in Michoacán are Purépecha (109,361), Náhuatl (4,706), Mazahua (4,338), Otomí (732), Mixteco (720), and Zapoteco (365) (INEGI, 2012). Michoacán is the 16th state in México and has 113 municipalities. It was originally called Valladolid. Michoacán formed in part by two large mountain ranges, the Transversal Volcanic Sierra and the Sierra Madre del Sur. There are more than 80 volcanoes in the state (Quinn, 2008).

Morelia, the capital of Michoacán, is México's colonial jewel and a UNESCO world heritage site. The city of Morelia is a college town with one of the oldest universities in México: La Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo established in 1540 by Vasco de Quiroga. Michoacán borders Jalisco and Guanajuato to the north, Querétaro on the northeast, the state of México on the east, Guerrero to the southeast, and Colima to the west. In addition, Michoacán's southeast border includes a 213-kilometer (132-mile) shoreline along the Pacific Ocean (Quinn, 2008).

Education in Michoacán

Education in Michoacán has a long history attached to Lázaro Cárdenas Del Río. The influence on rural education was very important because it was the center of cultural life in the 1920s and 1930s (Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds, 1999). Currently, education has become a major concern for educators in urban and rural areas of Michoacán and is

experiencing a major crisis; Gilberto Morelos Cisneros, coordinator of the governor's advisors, explained that Michoacán is in one of the last places in the country with respect to education (Morelos Cisneros, 2012). Of the 31 Mexican states excluding Districto Federal, Michoacán is 30th in rank in school performance results. Additionally, a recent documentary, *De Panzazo* by Carlos Loret de Mola (2012), outlined the educational crisis that Michoacán has been experiencing for decades and indicated Michoacán is the number one state in the nation for teacher absenteeism. Furthermore, in 2012, an accord was signed by President Peña Nieto into law that stated all teachers must take a mandatory professional and content area exam to be employed; however, it did not outline consequences if they failed the exam. Michoacán and Oaxaca refused to sign this accord. Of every ten teachers who are tested, eight will fail the exam; but with no consequences, they continue to teach or are paid to stay home. Statistics from February 2012 indicated the following education crisis México refuses to face. Of every 100 children enrolled in school, 45 will graduate junior high school, 27 will finish high school, seven will earn a bachelor's degree, and two will go on to graduate school (Loret de Mola, 2012).

In Rothenberg (1998), Rocío Arriola from Dos Estrellas, Michoacán, indicated, "The men only study up until sixth grade. They do not go to high school. 'Why study,' they say, 'when you can go to the United States, earn money, come back with a car, and build a house?'" (p. 317); furthermore, "They come back from the United States in cars and trucks, with elegant clothes, nice jeans, and silk shirts," (p. 317). The students see the changes, and they influence their actions.

One of the main reasons that students want to go to the United States is to support their families. According to Rothenberg, Jorge Urroz explained his poverty and then said, "Because of my childhood, I always wanted to go to the United States. I thought about it all the time. It was my dream to go north to work and then return home with clothes for my mother and all my brothers and sisters" (Rothenberg, 1998, p.126). He left school at eight years of age to begin working and then went to the United States for the first time when he was 14. With his first trip, he began a cycle of going and returning. Jorge explained,

> I returned home with dollars. I took my mother to a doctor. I bought food for my brothers and sisters. I also bought a small piece of land, just enough for a house. I was fifteen years old. When I was sixteen, I went back to the United States to work (Rothenberg, 1998, p. 126).

The image of the people coming and going between México and the United States helps form an idea in the minds of the youth. These different ideas and thoughts concerning education contribute to the problems of Michoacán's rural education.

Because Michoacán has a large rural community, the *telesecundaria* (teleconference high school) program was established to reach young adults living in small towns. Michoacán's state law of education of 1998 indicated that *primaria* and *secundaria* educations are obligatory for everyone in the state. In the United States, elementary school is the equivalent of *primaria*, and completing seventh, eighth, and a ninth grade is the same as finishing *secundaria.* Even with *telesecundaria,* which aims to extend education to all places in the country, and the state law, which makes education mandatory, there are still problems in assuring that everyone in Michoacán receives an

education. For example, Jorge is a taxi driver who was deported in December 2011 and returned to Michoacán in January 2012 after another failed attempt to cross the border:

> Yo vengo de un pueblito camino a Quiroga se llama Ario de Rosales, allí tenemos a varios que se han regresado del 'otro lado', los niños están decepcionados porque las escuelas aquí son una porquería, los maestros siempre andan en huelga o no vienen a la escuela, yo tuve que venirme a Morelia para trabajar y porque mi chamaco está en la secundaria y esa 'telesecundaria' es un desmadre. Casi diario anuncian que no hay escuela porque el maestro no vino. ¿Fíjese, cuando yo recién llegue, ni tenían televisión ni luz; ora como fregados van a educar a los jóvenes sin tener lo que necesitan? Yo le pregunto a usted, que haría usted en mi lugar, usted es maestra del otro lado, usted sabe muy bien que los maestros no andan con estas porquerías porque no se los toleran. Ahora me doy cuenta que mi hijo está bien preparado y no quiero que pierda eso. El nació en el otro lado es ciudadano y si tengo que se lo voy a mandar a mi hermano para que estudie mi hijo. (June, 2012)

> I come from a little town on the way to Quiroga; called Ario de Rosales there we have several who have returned from "the other side." The kids who live there now are highly disappointed because the schools are a mess here. The teachers are always on strike, or they don't come to school. I had to move to Morelia to find work and because my oldest boy is in Junior High. That teleconference school is a mess! Almost every day they announce there is no school because the teacher doesn't show up. Imagine! When I first got here, that school didn't even have a television or light, so how in the heck do they propose to educate the children without having what they need? I ask you, what would you do in my place? You are a teacher from the other side, and you know very well that teachers there are not on strike, nor do they pull the crap they do here; it is not tolerated. Now I realize my son is well prepared, and I don't want him to lose that. He was born on the other side, he is a citizen, and if I have to, I am going to send him to my brother so that my son can study. (June 2012)

Problems in education exist in Michoacán for many reasons not isolated or specific to Michoacán, the country is riddled with educational apathy. According to Carlos Loret de Mola (2012), the first major problem is that nobody knows how many teachers are working for the SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública), not even the SEP or the national teachers union, SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación). Approximately 21,000 teachers exist whom no one can identify on the payroll (Loret de

Mola, 2012). The second major problem is allocation of resources. México is one of the countries that allocate a high percentage of federal funds for education. As Loret de Mola (2012) outlined, 20.6% of the federal budget is applied toward education compared to the United States, which allocates 13.8%; however, by the time, the money is distributed; only 7% reaches the schools. The remaining 14% is allocated to administrative costs (Loret de Mola, 2012).

Finally, how teachers obtain their positions is indicative of a broken system; 20% of teachers graduated from Normal Teacher University and obtained their positions through this accreditation. Another 20% obtained their positions through the teacher's union, SNTE; 14% were employed through the SEP; 16% were placed through a public lottery; 9% were employed by recommendation of a person in power; 5% inherited their positions; and 1% paid for their positions (Loret de Mola, 2012). The consequences of how funding is distributed is that there are schools that do not promote productive learning environments. There are schools without roofs, without books, and with dirt floors. Most recently, the arrival of *Los Retornos* appears to have exacerbated an educational system already strained by lack of resources and substandard infrastructure in urban and rural areas.

Though many have called for changes, the national teachers union SNTE has fought changes it does not support. México has talented students that want to get ahead but cannot. Mexican public education is secular, free and accessible to all, as guaranteed in the constitution enacted in 1917, but its results are poor, according to statistics (Loret de Mola, 2012). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD), an international economic advisory group based in Paris has released data indicating México's educational ranking is among the worst of the OECD countries, putting the country at a disadvantage in an increasingly globalized world, critics say. "This is the moment México could take off included seven students between the ages of eight to nineteen years old, three parents, extended family members, three teachers, two school administrators, a government agency representative and two other previous *Retorno* students who had been taken to México and raised there but have since returned to the United States. and catch up with more developed countries," says David Calderón, director of Mexicanos Primero, an education advocacy group. "What's holding México back is their education" (Loret de Mola, 2012).

Data Collection Process and Methodology

Once students were identified, they were contacted in person or by phone. If they responded to the phone call with interest in the research, the researcher interviewed them personally. Those who agreed to participate in the study were asked to sign an Informed Consent form (Appendix A) to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Written release permission was authorized by each participant according to Arizona State University Institutional Review Board policy and per approval of ASU's IRB (Appendix B). The researcher made every attempt to contact many schools or districts where the participant might be attending elementary, middle and high school. Either the researcher was informed at times by the school administrators that access to student records were denied, or that files had been purged, or that only the SEP could authorize release of student information but it would delay the research. At this point, the researcher realized

that with the looming teacher's strike and change in leadership at government agencies it would make it impossible to have access to schools or the department of education. The researcher determined that every effort must have been made to contact a positional authority in the school or district where *Los Retornos* might be enrolled. This was done, repeatedly. The government agency PROBEM contact indicated all student records were lost by the previous administration. Due to inaccessibility to schools, the researcher had to take on a grassroots approach to finding families; asking taxi drivers, store clerks, waiters, and anybody that would listen about the project. At last, one family was identified walking the streets of downtown Pátzcuaro; the mother assisted the researcher in contacting her children's godmother to recommend her to other families. Another participant provided the name of his high school friend who, as it turned out, was currently working in a restaurant in Morelia. However, this participant could not be confirmed because he worked long hours. Nevertheless, he provided the name of a friend who turned out to be Eddie.

Once *Los Retornos* met the criteria, I scheduled the interview appointment with each participant, and informed them of the nature of the study and the option to withdraw. For the seven who continued, a series of three guiding questions approved through the committee chair were used to frame the investigation:

> Guiding question #1: How did you experience the move to México and your new school?
>
> Guiding question #2: What has been the greatest challenge for you and your family since you moved to México?

Guiding question # 3: What do you miss most about living in the United States?

Once the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, the audio recordings were downloaded to an external hard drive and password protected. The follow up interviews were unstructured. During the initial interview process, each candidate was asked the specific question: How are you doing in school and at home? This question was designed to remove any ambiguity on the part of the interviewer, and to do two things: to validate/triangulate the data and to focus specifically on one aspect of the research. Kvale (1996) made a similar distinction between the research question and the interview question. Further, it was important to keep in mind that the findings may or may not illustrate that the families were able to preserve their social and cultural capital or that they created new identities because of this migration shift. In this regard, Jon Kabat-Zinn (1998) stated, "inquiry doesn't mean looking for answers" (as cited in Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) cautioned that the researcher must allow the data to emerge; doing *phenomenology* means capturing "rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings" (Bentz and Shapiro 1998. p. 104). For this reason, the actual questions asked of practitioner participants (both academics and enterprise representatives involved) were as follows:

1. How do you feel about the challenges of teaching students that come from the United States?

2. How did you come to the decision to be a teacher? How did it become important to you?

3. What are the qualities and/or characteristics that are valued in family and school life in Morelia, Michoacán?

4. What have you enjoyed most about the experience of U.S. students in your classroom?

A questionnaire duplicated from the Morelos study (Valencia Reyes, 2008) was used with previous permission to interview the *Los Retornos*. The questionnaire received approval from my dissertation chair prior to my fieldwork. This dissertation project complied with IRB requirements. The interviewees received written consent before the interviews. The questionnaire was administered to the participants with instructions on completing and returning the document when finished to ensure a higher return rate. The questionnaire contained an explanation of purpose, and addressed security issues by informing students that once questionnaires were returned, the results would be saved in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office for a period of one year, after which it would be shredded. The questionnaire included a statement from the researcher that no identification or personal information would be given out, sold or distributed in any form or fashion. The questionnaires served to triangulate the data received in the semi-structured interview (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The questionnaire was not used for analytical purposes quantitatively; rather the questionnaires were used as part of this qualitative analysis. The questionnaire was a bridge or tool to gather more qualitative data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The information from these questionnaire were used to create a visual map using post it stickies to search for and extract themes and patterns along with the personal interviews.

I conducted three separate interviews in-depth with each participant. People's behavior becomes meaningful when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them (Seidman, 2005). The series of three interviews allowed the interviewer and the participants to plumb the experience and place it in context (Seidman, 2005). My questions were "directed to the participant's experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question" (Welman & Kruger, 1999).

As stated above, as part of the phenomenological qualitative research, this study used Irving Seidman's three-part interviewing model. Seidman (2005) explained that

> Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. . . . Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their actions. (Seidman, 2005, p. 4).

Interviewing, in this sense, is helpful in constructing the case study of participants and understanding the context, as well hearing the voices.

Seidman's (2005) interviewing model consists of three parts because he argued that interviewing a person only once fails to gain insights into the deeper contexts. The deeper meanings of one's life and experience may be learned by placing one's life within the larger context of his or her social surroundings. Seidman's three-stage interviewing model is as follows:

1. Interview 1: Focused life history. In this stage, the interviewer asks the participant simple questions about his or her past, education and career achievements, the lives of friends, neighborhoods, and relatives and, thus,

places the lived experience of the participant in a larger context. The purpose here is to ask the "how" questions rather than the "why" questions.

2. Interview 2: The details of experience. In the second stage, the interviewer's purpose is to ask for details about the specific topic being studied. The interviewer here seeks for social context by asking the participant to reconstruct the details related to the topic of the study and allows the participant to talk about his or her opinions about, as well as interactions with, others in his or her social surroundings.
3. Interview 3: Reflection on the meaning. In this stage, the interviewer asks the participant about the meaning of his or her lived experience by asking questions such as "What is the meaning of this experience to you or to a larger society?" or "Given your specific experience, what do you see as a viable option for future action?" Seidman explained,

> Making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation. It also requires that they look at their personal experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs. The combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are now doing in their lives. The third interview can be productive only if the foundation for it has been established in the first two. (Seidman, 2005 pp. 18–19).

This three-stage interviewing model and the phenomenology methodology, together with the theoretical foundation grounded in the Latino critical race theory, provided a solid guide in carrying out and completing this dissertation. The researcher tried to maintain integrity and a sense of justice while conducting this project and used

the utmost objectivity within the limits of human capabilities in interpreting and presenting the findings of this study.

The first phase of this investigation included conducting research interviews with the seven *Retornos* and placing the findings within a broader context. The interviews were not all taped due to participant discomfort with recording but were all transcribed on the computer. . I encountered a higher resistance from the teachers and principal of the school I visited for three days. The strike may have influenced the school staff's reluctance to recordings. An alternative approach was to take notes on my computer or by hand in notebooks. Rather than conducting a simple interview-transcription process, the researcher analyzed each interview immediately after transcription. The researcher personally transcribed the interviews to become more familiar with the data. The findings were placed within the context of existing literature regarding the lives of immigrants and Latinos and their struggles in the educational sector in the United States. The timely analysis of each interview allowed the researcher to gain better insights into the lives and experiences of *Los Retornos*. After finishing the interview process with all the participants, the researcher reviewed the findings and analyzed them again to make sure that important points and implications were not omitted from the final analysis. The interviews were started the third week of May 2012 and were completed by the first week of July 2012. Because of the teachers' strike, it took approximately three weeks to complete all seven interviews.

Los Retornos selected for this study were purposefully selected. Purposeful sampling is the dominant strategy in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling seeks

information-rich cases studied in depth (Patton, 1990). Participants shared likenesses that correlated to my research questions. I made the appointments directly with them and, in the Robles' case, with their mother. The interviews were not all audiotaped not because of technological problems but due to participant discomfort with recording. The participants were recruited through snowball sampling with the assistance of key informants who had created a relationship with the participants who matched the study's criteria. Potential participants were contacted by phone, or in person. This first contact established an interview schedule mutually agreeable to both parties. The researcher allocated five days to pass prior to employing a follow-up telephone call to question whether respondents had more knowledge to share or make clear. At that point, the researcher heard about the frustration with the strike and its effect on the students.

Other qualitative methods included analyzing prior research documents such as the student's report cards and teacher comments, certificates earned by the students such as perfect attendance, math recognition and reading recognition certificates, articles related to SB 1070, newspaper articles related to unauthorized immigrants, and literature related to repatriation. The study results were compared and contrasted with what preceding researchers had learned from interviewing participants concerning the trials confronted and effective strategies used to overcome those barriers. In addition, informal interviews were used on numerous occasions as a form of bracketing (Seidman, 2005; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2001). In this study, bracketing entailed asking the participants to set aside their experiences from their old lives in the United States and educational

experience and to share their reflections about what they were presently experiencing. The informal interview has four characteristics employed by the researcher

1. The interviewer talks with people in the field informally, without use of a structured interview guide of any kind.
2. The researcher tries to remember his or her conversations with informants and uses jottings or brief notes taken in the field to help in the recall and writing of notes from experiences in the field.
3. Informal interviewing goes hand-in-hand with participant observation.
4. While in the field as an observer, informal interviews are casual conversations one might have with the people the researcher is observing.

Data obtained about how the participants "think and feel in the most direct ways" (Seidman, 2005). The researcher focused on "what goes on within" the participants and got the participants to "describe the lived experience in a language as free from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible." This is one form of bracketing.

A second form of bracketing in which, according to Seidman (2005), the researcher must 'bracket' her own preconceptions and enter into the individual's life world and use the self as an experiencing interpreter. The informal interview is a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person. The interview is reciprocal: both researcher and research participant are engaged in the dialogue.

The duration of interviews and the number of questions varied from one participant to another. Kvale (1999) remarked, concerning data capturing during a

qualitative interview, that it "is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest," in which the researcher attempts to "understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences" (pp. 1–2). At the root of phenomenology, the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) and allowing the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer, & Hyeon-Ae, 2001).

The informal interviewing was typically done as part of the process of observing in a social setting at school, in the neighborhood, in a family gathering, and during schoolyard play. Informal interviews were used because the theme of *Los Retornos* is in the early stages of development as an area of inquiry, and there is little literature describing the setting, experience, culture, or issues of interest. The researcher engaged in the fieldwork—observations and informal interviewing—to develop an understanding of the setting and to build rapport. The informal interviewing was used to uncover new topics of interest that may have been overlooked by previous researchers (Creswell, 2005). Because informal interviews occur "on the fly," it was difficult to tape-record this type of interview. Additionally, the informal interviews occurred during the process of observing a setting. As the observer, I participated in the conversation. As soon as possible, I made jottings or notes of the conversation. These jottings developed into a more complete account of the informal interview. Even with good field jottings, the details of an informal interview are quickly lost from memory (Crabtree, 2006).

Field notes (Rossman, & Rallis, 1998) were an important data source in this qualitative research. The researcher's field notes record what the researcher has heard for example I heard the Robles talking about being hungry and Alexis the oldest telling the two others to be quiet because he did not want mami upset. In the seen category, I saw the boys playing a game of soccer at school and noticed the many references to the boys as a 'gringo' but in an affectionate way. I also saw the hardship of living in a home without running water, having an outhouse for a bathroom and no refrigerator, the water was carried in buckets for their kitchen needs. To shower the students had a wood fire heater but there was no firewood. Instead, dry corncobs were used as wood. All this information allowed me thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process (Seidman, 2005). As the researcher, I was conscious not to become so absorbed in the data-collection process that I failed to reflect on what was happening. However, I tried to maintain a balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, feelings, and so on.

The school leaders in two instances arranged access to school participants during lunch, recess, and classes, and I was able to make observations. The researcher was not allowed to record or take pictures during class. Lunch was a great opportunity to speak to the mothers because they all brought lunches for the children and sat around to talk with each other, eat with their children, or simply catch up on neighborhood gossip. Depending on the circumstances, I talked directly to the participants during recess, observed schoolyard positioning and their playtime with other students, or sat around listening to the mothers and teacher's conversations.

Data Analysis Procedures

One analysis principle as suggested in the field book (Rossman & Rallis, 1998): "phenomenological analysis requires that the researcher approach the texts with an open mind, seeking what meaning and structures emerge" (p. 184). In their suggestions, they encourage analysts to choose what they want to focus on. Creswell (1998) stated that phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. The researcher needs to set aside all prejudgments, bracketing his or her experiences.

The problem with phenomenological research for many researchers is that it generates a large quantity of interview notes, tape recordings, jottings, or other records, all of which should be analyzed. Analysis is also necessarily messy because data do not tend to fall into neat categories and there can be many ways of linking between different parts of discussions or observations. Two methods used in this research are described below (Kvale, 1999).

Where the data were fairly disorganized—interview transcripts, unstructured notes or personal texts—, the first stage was to read through and get a feel for what was being said, identifying key themes and issues in each text. These points from all the texts were aggregated and organized with the aid of a mind-map and set of sticky notes. The resulting list was used as a set of points to interrogate the texts and structure and summarize them (e.g., "What is this participant talking about?"). Points that were not brought out through this process needed to be added. Hycner (1976) provided a more detailed description of this process:

> [U]nlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a "cookbook" set of instructions It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals. (p. 279).

Following Hycner's advice, I did not use a "cookbook" set of instructions, but kept my investigative posture and set of goals as my compass.

A good process to gather the data is interviewing. For this study, I used unstructured and semi structured interviews in the hopes they would reveal histories, emotions, events, personality traits, desires, dislikes, disputes, and more. A qualitative study is designed to be exploratory in nature, and this approach is particularly relevant with a topic such as *Los Retornos* that have been the focus of little investigatory research.

Thus, qualitative research is designed to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas (Creswell, 2003). According to Seidman (2005), the primary way a researcher can investigate an education organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the "others" who make up the organization or carry out the process. My goal as the researcher was to understand the meaning people involved in the *Retorno* experience made of their experiences, so interviewing provided a necessary avenue of inquiry for this project (Seidman, 2005).

Coding, Evaluation and Interpretation

The study focused on identifying meaningfulness, which was determined by analyzing and synthesizing responses from multiple angles through the research questions. In this study, the instruments used were interviewing, observing, and reviewing material culture. Inherent in qualitative analysis is placing one's research

within epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives (Patton, 2001; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Analyzing qualitative data has a sense of mystery to it because it lacks formulas and ground rules (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Information emerges as the researcher studies the data. Creswell (2003) recommended a multiple-step process for analysis and interpretation, which involved 1) organizing, preparing and transcribing the interviews including field notes, 2) reading the data repeatedly and memoing reflections, 3) coding the data, 4) identifying and interconnecting themes from the codes, 5) narrating the analysis, and 6) interpreting the data.

Thus, the first stage of analysis involved familiarization with the material. The researcher transcribed each audio interview, thus each sentence; paragraph and entire interview were replayed in part and in entirety at least three times. Each transcript was fully read at least three times prior to beginning coding. Field notes, memos and reflective notes were dated to correlate them with the interviews. Some of these notes were written on the printed transcripts. Some were kept in separate log files on the computer. The researcher maintained a reflective log during the review process to note personal thoughts and to bracket any biases. Backup copies of the full transcriptions, field notes and reflective notes were copied and stored in a separate hard drive.

During this process, the researcher used the constant comparative method of analysis. Any identifiable information regarding the participant on audio was stripped in the transcription to ensure privacy. Each student was given a pseudonym beginning with a unique letter of the alphabet to aid in transcription. Some pseudonyms identified the

participant's characterization; for instance, Diego and Dora's pseudonym was chosen because the participants resembled Diego of Where's Diego and Dora the Explorer. Words, phrases, interpretations of thinking patterns, feelings, and events were noted through open coding on the transcript and written on a sticky note and integrated into the mental map wall. This coding included topics and units of meaning. The material was then recoded using selective coding to search for clusters of meaning.

The clusters of meaning were regrouped into themes (Moustakas, 1994) from which 27 themes emerged. The researcher used the constant comparison method to analyze the data for the final guiding question. As each interview was read and coded, the researcher compared it to itself to check for consistency and to the other participants' interviews to determine 1) whether any *Retorno* student had shared themes, and 2) to determine whether *Los Retornos* had unique perspectives on their personal experiences. During this compare/contrast process, duplicate or similar units of meaning and themes were merged, isolated or eliminated. This reduced the number of major coded themes to 14, all related to friends, family, and teachers.

For this project the use of narrative inquiry within a methodological framework was comprised of critical race methodology, which accounts for the intersections of race and social class (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001); narrative analysis, which exposes power relations; and *testimonios* (life narratives), which craft a collective consciousness within marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). My position within the research as a *Retorno,* participants' backgrounds, the methods used to uncover and contextualize participants' *testimonios* [life narratives], and limitations of the study are discussed

below. Triangulation of different data sources was important in this case study analysis (Creswell, 2002). Participants' mothers willingly provided physical artifacts related to their particular situation in their school and home experience, such as their birth certificates to confirm citizenship, social security cards, and old school report cards.

The interview protocol included questions that focused on the issue of being an English-dominant student, what it means to be a U.S.-citizen living in México, and the schoolyard positioning experience as students navigated the new country, culture, and language. Debriefing the participants was conducted in their home, school, schoolyard, outside cafés, and a restaurant. The participants were informed the interview would be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The steps in qualitative analysis included (a) preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the questionnaires, (b) transcribing interviews and coding the data by segmenting and labeling the text, (c) using codes to develop themes by aggregating similar codes together, (d) connecting and interrelating themes, and (e) constructing a narrative (Creswell, 2002). To augment further discussion, I made site observations and participated in informal interviews at school over a three-day span before the school shut down for the strike.

As a participant observer, I immersed myself in the participants' lives during school hours, after school, and at family functions. The young adult participants worked in the hospitality business, and I was able to sit and make observations while they went about their business. Observations allowed identifying behaviors that cannot be detected during interviews and discussions. My field notes recorded daily experiences and

informal conversations with students, parents, teachers, and two administrators. I was not able to speak with work supervisors of the young adult participants. Discussions with students, administrators, and teachers occurred over a 3-day span and during the course of a normal school day. I deliberately sought out the student participants in places such as the playground during recess and lunch and after school. My conversations with teachers and administrators were conducted before, after school, and in one meeting.

I received an invitation to stay a long weekend with the Robles family and although I initially declined, their persistence motivated me to accept as I saw it as an opportunity to make observations and expand on the interviews; this proved to be a great way to strike up conversations with participants' mothers, cousins, and grandmothers. Discussions—informal interviews—with these individuals helped me to gain a sense of the participants' upbringing and to understand how the mothers, aunts, and grandmothers felt about education, English-speaking children, and mixed-nativity families. Field notes and observer comments provided rich details. To further enhance my extended-family experience, I participated in a Sunday family comida (dinner) with Tony and Ed and socialized with the young adults at a bar with other friends.

Spending time with parents, extended family, and friends enabled rapport to be established with participants' families, allowing trust to open dialogue even during sensitive questions about *Los Retornos,* such as the status of their legality in the United States and México. Krueger and Casey (2000) supported the advantage of using this method. The purpose of immersion through the process of socializing was to listen and gather information.

Data analysis involved developing a detailed description of each case of students. During the analysis, the case was situated within its context so the case description and themes were related to the specific activities and situations involved in the case (Creswell & Maitta, 2002). This analysis is rich in the context or setting, in which the case presents itself (Merriam, 1998). Based on this analysis, I provided a detailed narration of the case, using an elaborate perspective about some incidents, followed by an up-close description.

In multiple case study design, the analysis is performed at two levels: within each case and across cases (Stake, 1995). Analysis of these data can be a holistic analysis of the entire case or an embedded analysis of a specific aspect of the cases (Yin, 1994). In the proposed study, first, each case of a selected *Retorno* student was analyzed individually. Doing so enabled me to identify internal or external factors that had a similar or different effect on the study participants as related to their experiences in school and in the community.

Justification of Analysis Method: Establishing Credibility

The criteria for judging a qualitative study differ from those used for quantitative research. In qualitative design, the researcher seeks believability based on coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1990) and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures. The uniqueness of the qualitative study within a specific context precludes its being exactly replicated in another context. However, statements about the researcher's positions—the central assumptions, the selection of informants, the biases

and values of the researcher—enhance the study's chances of being replicated in another setting (Creswell, 2003).

Validating Findings

To validate the findings, that is, to determine the credibility of the information and whether it matches reality (Merriam, 1998), outlined four primary forms that were used in the second, qualitative phase of the study: (a) triangulation, converging different sources of information (interviews, observations, documents, artifacts); (b) member-checking, getting feedback from participants on the accuracy of the identified categories and themes; (c) providing rich, thick description to convey the findings.

Advantages of this design

Qualitative research is useful for describing or answering questions about particular, localized occurrences or contexts and the perspectives of particular groups toward events, beliefs, practices. It is also useful for exploring a complex research area about which little is known or for beginning to understand a group or phenomenon. Qualitative questions have the following characteristics: The questions used in this project had the potential to illuminate everyday life, to make the familiar strange and better understood. For example, initially the Robles' students stated they liked playing outside because in the U.S. they couldn't do that due to safety concerns of living in the city; however, with further probing and asking the Robles children what they missed the most about living in the United States they all mentioned resources in the school, computers, internet, library, workbooks etc. Probing further revealed what they really missed was having entertainment in their daily lives, they didn't have access to

computers, books or even toys, they enjoyed playing outside but missed the connectedness to more mental diversions.

Furthermore, questions can provide interpretation of local meanings that activities and practices have for the group engaged in them and illuminate differences across settings (e.g., at a family gathering held at the Robles' house I noticed the paternal grandmother made frequent comments about the fact the children spoke English to visitors, she was proud her children spoke English and connected that ability to being smart. The *abuela* made comments like "mis nietos son muy inteligentes, vienen del otro lado y saben ingles," (my grandchildren are very smart, they come from the 'other side', they speak English). This demostartes how one person perceives being smart and connects it to bi-lingual skills as a measurement of smartness; however, it may not be how another person estimates or values what constitues intelligence but although both might be considerably different from how smartness is measured, both would indicate the presence of intelligence.intelligence.

Trustworthiness of the Findings

Trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell, 2005) all speak to the issue of ensuring that the collected and analyzed data were as accurate as possible. Any trustworthiness issues were resolved through triangulation using multiple interviews, interview techniques, and member checking. Bracketing (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007) any author bias allowed separation of personal experiences and feelings from that of the participant. Bracketing was another validity procedure used to ensure triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using rich, thick descriptions of the findings aided in

transporting the reader into the life world of the participant (Groenewald, 2004), and is seen as another triangulation tool. This researcher used multiple interviews, bracketing, and expression of rich descriptions to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

The limitations of This Design

This design has the following limitations. Qualitative research has subjectivity that is inherent. Thus, the researcher has substantial control over both the design and the analysis; hence, the study is influenced by the researcher's perceptions (Ratner, 2002). Additionally, phenomenology is very labor intensive. Collection and analysis occur simultaneously, the amount of data gathered is enormous, and few computer programs are available to assist with management and analysis. Much of the work is done by hand therefore the design is time intensive. The purpose of qualitative research is to seek deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon, and understanding generally develops over time (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The results have limited generalizability. The unique features of the setting or individuals studied make it difficult to generalize. Qualitative researchers argue that all social structures are unique, so generalizability is an inappropriate standard by which to judge qualitative research.

Since the purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of how Mexican schools receive and help *Retorno* students transition from one school system to another, multiple sources of data would yield this richness. A limitation may be the lack of face-to-face interviews with more teachers, school leaders and interviewees, which would have allowed for richer field notes. Still another limitation concerned the pool of

participants deriving from a single school rather than from various sources, however, that limitation seemed less a concern as the participants grew up in different towns.

Potential Threats

There was a danger that this project may not happen at all due to the teacher's strike and the *Sexenio*. . There was also the threat of having too few participants in the study, or of having to broaden the sampling to students to other states; however this threat was overcome by using the snowballing process. Author bias could have been a threat to trustworthiness. Because a researcher cannot detach from his or her biases, the author resolved bias threats through the process of bracketing views and opinions before and during the interview process (Creswell, et. al., 2007). Bias was also bracketed using memo and reflective logs. A bias may have manifested itself by the interviewer asking leading questions in the unstructured interview; this was checked by using question previously approved by committee chair.

Ethical Issues

The students voluntarily signed informed consent forms, helped to minimize suspicion, and encouraged sincere responses by informing the participants that they were participating in a research project to understand the immigration experience of *Los Retornos* in addition to their life experiences as *Retorno* students. The procedures, benefits and risks were stated clearly both verbally and in writing, and the subjects were Reminded they were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time.

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were addressed at each phase in the study. In compliance with the regulations of the ASU Institutional Review Board (IRB), permission for conducting the research was obtained prior to launching any work. The ASU Request for Review Form was filed, providing information about the principal investigator, the project title and type, source of funding, type of review requested, and number and type of participants. Application for research permission contained the description of the project and its significance, methods and procedures, participants, and research status. An informed consent form was developed; the consent form provided by ASU IRB department was translated into Spanish to provide this form in English and Spanish. The form stated that the participants were guaranteed certain rights, agreed to be involved in the study, and acknowledged their rights were protected. A statement relating to informed consent was provided to participants.

The anonymity of participants was protected by pseudonym coding and keeping responses confidential. During individual interviews with the selected respondents, they were assigned fictitious names for use in their description and reporting the results. All study data is kept in a locked metal file cabinet at all times and will be destroyed in a shredder after three years. While in México, I made sure to have multiple copies of data, a flash drive, the Internet, Dropbox, and hard copies kept in a locked safe provided by Instituto Baden Powell. Participants were told summary data would be disseminated to the professional community, but in no way would it be possible to trace responses to individuals.

I chose Rossman and Rallis (1998) concept: Phenomenology is a focus on the essence of lived experience. As the researcher, I was engaged in phenomenological research focus in-depth on the meaning of a particular aspect of experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection the quintessential meaning of the experience will be reviewed. Language is viewed as the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed; hence, it is for this reason that I used English and Spanish. The purposes of phenomenological inquiry are description, interpretation, and critical self-reflection into the "world as world" (Van Manen, 1990) Central is the notion of intentionality and caring: the researcher inquires about the essence of lived experience." (p. 72). Although this concept is the longest, it allowed me to understand the meaning of phenomenology, since the authors express it in a more specific and profound way. I could understand that the phenomenology is a research design, which seeks to describe, interpret, and understand more deeply the experiences of people through dialogue and reflection.

Chapter 4: Participants

Qualitative research genres exist in great variety, and many excellent texts serve as guides to their assumptions and approaches. Many qualitative researchers, despite their various methodological stances, tend to espouse some common values and enact a family of procedures for the conduct of a study. These interests take qualitative researchers into natural settings, rather than laboratories, and foster pragmatism in using multiple methods—"a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). I was intrigued by qualitative research because of the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and by the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. I was also exquisitely aware that they work in and through interpretations—their own and others'—layered in complex hermeneutic circles to understand text as a whole.

Los Retornos: The Participants

This research project consisted of seven students, between the ages of eight to nineteen and who were identified as U. S. citizens, and at some point in their academic career attended schools in North America. Additionally, it included three teachers, a teacher on assignment acting as vice-principal and a school principal in addition to a government agency representative. Moreover, I included two *Retornos* who had moved to Michoacán, México in their elementary, school years and moved back to Arizona to finish their high school. To qualify for this study, participants had to be enrolled in school in Michoacán in elementary, middle or high school and were English biliterate and bilingual (English and Spanish speakers). Verification of this was self-reported and where

possible academic records confirmed this through a positional authority. Participants were a mix of male and female. Given that the construct *Los Retornos* can have several meanings, the following were true of all participants: 1) members were English biliterate dominant, 2) members had migrated to México in the last year, or 3) members were navigating the Mexican public or private school system or 4) they were of diverse socioeconomic levels.

Initially, some of the recruitment names were supposed to come from the database of an immigration center, normal school and the department of education. This database was unavailable due to a teachers' strike and a *Sexenio* establishing the new presidency and change of staff in government agencies. With the database inaccessible, a widening of the search included another measure to secure a sample population. Snowball sampling, a process of expanding the sample population by having participants recommend other potential participants, (Ary, 2006; Bogden & Biklen, 2007) was considered an appropriate method of securing participants since the researcher assumed that the native population may know students or families that had returned to Michoacán, México from the United States. Two participants were identified through this method and from there it snowballed into finding the Robles' children.

Next, the researcher contacted Mirta's Comadre, Mrs. Robles, to determine whether her family met the criteria for participation. All individuals who initially qualified were interviewed in person, to determine their interest in and qualifications for the study. This initial interview served as a screening process. These were the first and second purposeful samplings: locating potential *Retornos* and if they had moved to

Michoacán in the last year and verifying both constructs. Because saturation could be reached with any number of sample members, a specific number of students were not predetermined. While both Boyd (2001) and Creswell (1998, pp. 65 & 113) concluded that ten interviews with participants is optimal to reach saturation, the researcher and committee determined that seven participants had provided enough deep and repetitive data for saturation.

Name	Age	Grade	Preferred Language	Socioeconomics
Alexis	12	6th	English	Abject poverty
Diego	10	4th	Spanglish	Abject poverty
Dora	8	2nd	Spanish	Abject poverty
Lily	10	4th	English	Middle class
Laura	9	3rd	English	Middle class
Ed	15	Limbo	English	Poor
Tony	19	3rd Prepa	English	Middle class
Louis	26	Graduate	Bilingual	Upper middle class
Judith	17	11th	Bilingual	Poor

Participants	Position	Years in Service
Maestra Marcela	**3rd, 6th, and 7th grade teacher**	**23 years**
Maestro Nico	**2nd grade teacher**	**15 years**
Director	**Principal**	**7 years**
Maestra Mirta	**6th grade teacher**	**10 years**
Lic. López	**PROBEM Director**	**New**

The Tarasca Family

The Tarasca family lived in what is called "La Meseta Tarasca," the Purhépecha corridor that runs the perimeter of Lake Patzcuaro. The Purhépechas, traditionally called *Tarascans*, are Michoacán's indigenous group and are centered in the northwestern region of Michoacán. This family consisted of mother, father, three children with a maternal grandmother living with them.

I met them on a beautiful Saturday morning in the downtown plaza of Pátzcuaro, a small fishing village approximately 30 kilometers west of Morelia. The village is predominantly Purhépecha. I was strolling through the street when I heard two little girls singing in perfect English. I stopped to listen, approached them, and asked where they learned to speak such perfect English. They were shy at first. I saw their mother out of the corner of my eye approaching. I waited for the mother and introduced myself, showed her my ASU ID, and proceeded to ask her if she had a few minutes to talk over a cup of coffee. After introductions and a brief explanation of my study, I immediately

asked them to participate, and the mother agreed. An informal interview ensued as I observed the children interact with each other and their family. The girls chattered incessantly in English while the boy was quiet and watchful. I was introduced to the grandmother, aunt, and three children. The young boy, who was five, had been diagnosed with a mild form of autism in California. The oldest girl was ten, and the middle girl was eight.

The journey to "El Norte" started with the father, Juan, going to California in 1998. He had a permit to go work seasonal work in the grape winery industry and had been able to go and come in a seasonal program that was part of California's Wine industry. His first language was Purhépecha, and he learned Spanish in elementary school. After the California worker program was unexpectedly terminated, the father made the decision to stay and continue to send remittances home, with the purpose being to have a house built before the children were born. Mirta's family had been farming for generations; their chief crops were strawberries, beans, and corn. About the time that North American Free Trade Agreement was signed or shortly thereafter, the farmers noticed that a lot of grain and strawberries were being imported by Wal-Mart and sold at a cheaper price.

> Mirta: *Nosotros éramos granjeros por muchos años, nosotros somos ejidatarios, pero para nada nos sirve tener esa tierra que ya no nos costea plantar porque el precio es demasiado bajo y la producción del grano y las fresas ha cambiado mucho; ahora usted puede ver que hay mucha tierra, muchos ejidos, que ya no producen aquí en Michoacán porque no costea y no se puede competir con tiendas como el Wal-Mart. Cuando vinieron los del gobierno a hablar con nosotros sobre el trato de comercio de NAFTA, nosotros pensamos que iba ser algo muy bueno para nuestra industria. Nunca pensamos que iba a matar la producción local de los granos que es algo muy esencial en nuestra dieta la fresa*

y los cerdos. Mucha gente vendió sus tierras para irse al norte y ahora los pobres no tienen ni un lote en donde construir una casita. Mucha gente ve que lo único que si sobrevivió ese trato fue el aguacate. Pero el granjero chico que quiere mantener a su familia es algo del pasado porque ya no costea.

(We were farmers for many years; we are *Ejidatarios*, but it does not do us any good to have that land because it is not cost effective to plant anymore, the price has fallen so much, and the production of grains and strawberries has changed a lot. Now you can see there are many plots of land abandoned, they do not plant or produce in Michoacán like they used to because it is not cost effective nor can we compete with Wal-Mart. When government officials came to talk to us about the NAFTA, we all thought it was going to be something really good for us too, we never thought that it was going to kill our grain, strawberry, and pig farming industry at a collective level. Many people opted to sell their plots of land to go north and now these poor people don't have anything to return to, they have nothing to build a little house on. Many people notice that the only industry that survived the contract is the avocado industry. Nevertheless, the local small farmer that wants to plant knows that it is outdated because it isn't cost effective.)

The decision to go to "El Norte" was influenced by the dying strawberry and grain farming industry; Mirta stayed behind and received remittances for approximately seven years. The couple did not have children at the time. Their whole goal was to build a home and hope for a better future. After seven years and not enough economic progress, Mirta decided she wanted to join her husband, so they made the decision that she would go to California too. The immigration experience of crossing the border was easy for Mirta. Her cousin had lent her papers and Mirta crossed the line with those papers.

Yo tuve suerte porque no tuve que cruzar la frontera por el desierto con un coyote como lo tiene que hacer mucha gente. Tenía una prima en California que tenía mucho parecido a mí, y ella ofreció prestarme sus papeles para cruzar. En ese entonces no verificaban huellas como lo hacen hoy. Cuando iba cruzando por la línea tenía tanto miedo que me iban descubrir pero gracias a Dios que pase sin problemas.

I was lucky because I did not have to cross the desert with a coyote like many people have to do. I had a cousin in California that resembled me a lot, and she

offered to lend me her papers to cross. During that time, they did not verify fingerprints like they do now. When I was crossing, I was so terrified that I would be caught but thank God, I crossed without any problems.

Mirta had her first daughter, Lily, less than a year later; two years later came her second daughter, Laurel, and three years later her son Juanito was born. Juan and Mirta never lost sight of continuing their dream of finishing their house in Michoacán. After eleven years of working, saving, and sacrificing, they had a new truck, their little house in Michoacán, furniture, and the modern comforts of a washing machine, dryer, microwave, and televisions in every room. In addition, the children were going to school.

Mirta and Juan liked that their daughters were smart and did well in school; their five-year-old son, Juanito, started school that fall and was diagnosed with a mild form of autism. He did not talk much and was very withdrawn. Mirta had attributed it to extreme shyness, and the school wanted to put him in special classes, but Mirta refused. She wanted him in regular classes and never quite accepted that diagnosis.

Mirta: *Yo tuve que pelearme con los de la escuela porque querían mandar a Juanito a una escuela especial para niños con desabilidades, pero yo les peleé porque yo no veía todo lo que me decían en la escuela que él no podía acercarse emocionalmente, no participaba y no aprendía pero yo veía en la casa algo diferente, Juanito abrazaba a sus hermanas, él se incorporaba con nosotros aunque no habla casi nada pero yo lo vi como que era muy penoso y por ser el chiquito a la mejor nosotros le hicimos mal y lo mimamos mucho. Bueno pero al fin, yo gané y le empezaron a dar terapias allí en la misma escuela de Speech, y manualidades. Ahora que estamos aquí me lo recibieron bien en la escuela y la maestra no se ha quejado que le hace falta algo al niño entonces no sé que va pasar.*

(I had to fight with the school because they wanted to send Juanito to a different school for children with disabilities. I fought them because I didn't see the things they were telling me were wrong with him: that he didn't like physical contact, couldn't express emotion, didn't participate verbally, and wasn't learning, but I saw him different at home. Juanito hugged his sisters; he liked to be with us although he didn't speak much. But I saw him as being very shy, and because he

> is the baby, maybe we spoiled him too much. But in the end, I won! They began to give him speech therapy and work with manipulatives in the same school. Now that we are here, he got accepted at school, and the teacher has not complained that he needs something or something is lacking, so I don't know what is going to happen.)

During that fall of 2011, Mirta's husband was stopped during a routine traffic stop. He asked the police officers why they had stopped since he did not do anything; the police asked for his papers, he once again asked why they had stopped him; without any answers from the police other than the fact he refused to provide papers, he was arrested. He spent two weeks in jail before Mirta was able to gather enough money to post bail and he was ordered to appear in court. He had never been in trouble with the law; three years previously, they had begun the process of submitting applications for permanent residency, but all the applications appeared to be at a standstill. Their lawyer wanted more money, and they did not have it. After agonizing for several days and speaking to their lawyer, they made the decision to move back to Michoacán. They planned to leave before Juan's court day in 90 days, which gave them time to save a little more money, so they both took on second jobs and moved in with their cousin to save rent and utility costs. Juan paid his ticket, he was charged with resisting arrest although he states he never resisted, but Juan knew the immigration issue was going to be addressed and they might end up separated like many other families they knew of.

> *Mire maestra, yo nunca resistí que me arrestaran, eso fue un invento de la policía porque me negué darles comprobante de ciudadanía. Yo sé que es un fraude lo que hicieron pero no puedo pelearles en corte porque no gano. Ellos me identificaron como hispano, mexicano, y fue suficiente para que me pararan. Ahora yo he visto que a muchos de mis cuates los han deportado y ha impactado a su familia porque dejan a sus familias abandonadas y eso no es bueno para nadie*.

(Listen teacher, I never resisted arrest, that was made up by the police because I refused to produce proof of citizenship. I know it is illegal what they did, it is fraud, but I cannot fight them in court, I would never win. They identified me as Hispanic, Mexican and it was enough for them to pull me over. I have seen many of my friends they have gotten deported and it has affected their families harshly; they abandon their families and it is not good for anyone.)

In December 2011, they left California and headed to Michoacán. They felt more fortunate than others did because they had a house to come home to, furniture, and a nice truck. They were able to buy a used trailer to take their belongings with them; many of their friends left in a hurry and lost all or many of their possessions. They were worried about making money but had saved enough money to start a little store out of their home.

Lily and Laurel, Juan and Mirta's daughters, are inseparable. They dream of growing up to be singers. Their favorite singer is Beyoncé. Although they are two years apart in age, they are close in height and weight and get a kick out of people thinking they are twins; they like to dress alike. They both love to laugh, and they giggle about any little thing they see as funny. They are both very proud they speak English and do not want to forget it. They love Barbies and playing princess. They love to color and ride their bikes. They are both very protective of Juanito and look out for him; they include him in their play and talk to him nonstop. Both girls are very outgoing once they feel comfortable with strangers. They like to wear dresses and want a Nintendo Wii with lots of games. The following is from their interview in English:

R: How have you enjoyed living here in Michoacán?

Lily: Well, it's okay; it's different; the school is different. They don't have carpet or tile on the floors, and there are no TVs, no libraries here, and the teachers are strict.

Laura: They don't have computers but we have one at home.

Lily: I like it because we are the smartest kids in the class.

R: How do you know that?

Lily: The teacher tells everybody in the class. She says, "You all have to work hard to learn to be smart like Lily y Laura." [Both laugh at this statement.]

Lily: Sometimes the teacher lets me help the other kids who need help and that makes me feel smart.

Laura: Yeah! Me too, I like helping the kids. I feel like a teacher helper.

R: Are there things you miss about living in the U.S.?

Lily: Yes! I miss libraries, and I miss my friends and my teachers too.

Laura: Me too!

R: What language are you most comfortable using, English or Spanish?

Lily: English! I love English!

Laura: English! Me too! I love English! I like Spanish too but just a little.

R: How do you feel learning in Spanish all day?

Lily: It's okay. However, at first, it was a little bit hard, but now it is easy. Teacher, did you know that we only go to school til lunch? I don't like it! I miss my art class and music class.

Laura: Yeah, me too! Spanish was a little hard—my head hurt at first, but now it's okay. I like we only go half day because I can play outside, ride my bike, or play Barbies.

R: What about Juanito? Does he like it here?

Lily: I don't know. He doesn't like to talk so I don't know, but I think he does because he smiles a lot.

R: Do you get to see him at school?

Lily: No, he is in in Kinder, and I am in fourth

R: What do you miss the most about living in California?

> Lily: I miss all the things we used to do, go to the movies, to eat out, go to the library, go to my friends to visit, go to the mall to look. I miss my school. I could use computers there and I could take books home.
>
> Laura: Me too!

The unstructured and informal interviews with the Tarasca family took place in one afternoon; arrangements were made to follow up but when I called, I did not get an answer. After repeated attempts to reconnect the Researcher realized further attempts would not work due to time constraints.

Unstructured and semi-structured interviews reveal histories, emotions, events, personality traits, desires, dislikes, disputes and more. Qualitative study is designed to be exploratory in nature, and this is particularly relevant with subjects such as the Tarasca family, which have had little investigatory research. Thus, qualitative research is designed to "listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas" (Creswell, 2003).

Robles Family

Alex and her husband, Diego, lived in Phoenix, Arizona, for more than fifteen years. All their children were born in Phoenix, except the baby who was 3 months old. The oldest, Alexis, is 12 years old; the middle son, Diego, is 10; and their daughter, Dora, is eight. Since their return to México a year earlier, a baby boy was born. Diego worked doing landscaping, car mechanics, in Phoenix, AZ, and construction side jobs; Alex worked cleaning houses and taking care of children. They took out a tax identity number to pay taxes and to be able to buy a home. They bought a house with a subprime interest, and during the housing bust of 2008, they lost their home. Another contributing factor to

the repossession of their home was that after the passage of SB 1070, Diego's jobs began to dry up. Driving became stressful because they never knew when they might run into a roadblock. They belonged to a network in which text messages were sent with information on the latest roadblocks by ICE and Arpaio. These messages kept them many times from being caught at checkpoints. The children were doing very well in school, and they were happy.

> R: *Dígame de esta red de textos que ustedes usaban para mandar anuncios de las redes de Arpaio.*
>
> (Tell me about the announcement that people used via text about roadblock searches by Arpaio.)
>
> Alex: *Es que en Phoenix alguien, no se quien, incorporó un servicio de textos que mandaban por Internet dando anuncio en donde estaban los sheriffs haciendo redadas. Otro padre nos dio la información y nosotros nos inscribimos a través del Internet.*
>
> (In Phoenix somebody, I don't know who, came up with the idea of having people sign up through the Internet to receive text messages giving information where sheriffs were doing roadblock checks. Another parent gave us the information to sign up through the Internet)
>
> R: *¿Qué tipos de anuncios mandaban en los textos?*
>
> (What types of announcements were sent through text messages?)
>
> Alex: *Un anuncio decía que tuviéramos cuidado a todos manejando en la Indian School o cualquier calle porque había reten de sheriffs y así de esa manera podíamos evitar pasar por allí. Fue una manera muy genial para darnos saber que tuviéramos cuidado.*
>
> (A message would come through saying we needed to avoid Indian School Road or any other road because the sheriffs had set up a roadblock and in that way we would avoid that area and not pass through there. It was a smart idea to let us know ahead of time to be careful.)

The decision to leave family behind in México was not an easy one; Alex and Diego knew that they were running the risk of never seeing their families again but it was

a risk they were willing to take. They both had aging parents as well as grandparents and worried about their health; economic hardships and a failed economy forced them to immigrate. The Robles family came from an agrarian background like many other families that migrated north. Their travel to "El Norte" was out of desperation from not having enough food or jobs. They lived in the outskirts of Morelia, Michoacán, in an infonavit (Ejido house); they sold the property to have enough money to pay a coyote to help them cross the desert. The trek across the desert was arduous and hard. They walked for nearly two weeks and, at times, did not feel they were going to make it.

R: ¿*Me puedes contar de tu experiencia cruzando por el desierto?*

(Can you tell me about your experience crossing the desert?)

Alex: *Tuvimos poca suerte que teníamos gente conocida que ya había cruzado varias veces, y nos dieron consejos que tipo de zapatos debemos comprar, que llevar, y el señor que nos cruzó era un hombre bueno y ya había hecho varios viajes por el desierto con otra gente. Yo nunca me preocupé de que me trataran mal o que nos tocara mala gente porque el grupo con quien caminábamos era de nuestra colonia y pues le pusimos mucha confianza a todos.*

(We were a little lucky that we already had people that had crossed several times and advised us as to the right shoes to buy, what to carry, and our coyote was a nice guy from our neighborhood who made many trips across. I never worried about being caught up with bad people because the group walking with us was from our community, and a lot of trust was placed on the guy that helped us cross.)

R: *Cuéntame de tu experiencia.* ¿C*uánto duraron en cruzar?*

(Tell me about your experience. How long did it take you to cross?)

Alex: *Bueno de aquí de Michoacán tomamos un autobús hasta la frontera de Sonora. Luego llegamos a un hotel donde nos esperaba el señor que era compadre de una conocida en mi colonia; duramos dos semanas esperando que nos dijera el señor cuando íbamos a cruzar. Andábamos ya desesperados porque no traíamos mucho dinero y el costo del hotel fue inesperado aunque todos lo compartimos. Éramos un grupo de quince personas. Ya cuando vino el señor nos*

dio instrucciones que compráramos sardinas, galletas saladas y dos galones de agua para cada persona. Esa misma noche empezamos la caminada. El señor no dio unas pastillas para que se nos quitara el sueño y nos diera energía, y nos dio chicles para que no nos tomáramos mucha agua. Siempre caminábamos en la noche; teníamos que tener cuidado que no pisáramos en un pozo porque si nos lastimábamos perjudicábamos a todo el grupo. Descansábamos en el día debajo de árboles o arbustos que nos escondían y al atardecer dábamos paso otra vez. Nos tomamos pastillas para la energía y también de sal para conservar agua. El señor que nos ayudó traía teléfono satélite y traía para escuchar a los de la migra por radio y audífonos. Él sabía inglés y eso le ayudó mucho.

(Well, from here in Michoacán we took a bus to the border of Sonora. We arrived at a hotel where the man was waiting for us; he was a friend of a woman I met in my neighborhood. We waited in that hotel for two weeks for him to tell us when we were going to cross. We were getting desperate because the cost of the hotel was unexpected for so long although we split the cost between fifteen people. Then one day the man showed up and told us to be ready to start, he took us to the store to buy sardines, crackers and two gallons of water for each person. That same night he came for us and gave us a pill that would take away tiredness and sleepiness, he also gave us gum to chew so that we would not drink a lot of water. We always travelled by night; we had to be careful we did not step in potholes because if we got hurt it would endanger the whole group. We walked for almost two weeks. We would rest during the day under bushes and trees for cover, and we took energy and salt pills that gave us energy and helped us retain water to not get tired. The man that helped us cross had a satellite phone and a radio with headphones to hear where the ICE agents were. He knew English and that helped him a lot.)

After they arrived in Phoenix, their padrino de boda (wedding godfather) helped them get settled, and it was in this manner they established themselves in the community. They agreed that both would need to get jobs to get ahead. Alex got jobs cleaning construction homes, and Diego became a landscaper. After their first son, Alexis, was born, Alex decided to stay home and earn money taking care of other people's children. She was a nanny for a little over ten years. Right before they bought a house, she took on a night job to save enough money for the down payment on their home. They had a good life for fifteen years until SB 1070 passed and their jobs began to dry up; once they lost

their home, they began to talk about going back to México. They tried to stay and work for a little over a year. However, their living conditions were getting worse. They moved into a two-bedroom apartment for six months; when they could not afford that, they moved into a one bedroom. The children slept in the living room. At last, they moved in with Alex's godfather because money was scarce as were jobs. In the end, the pressure of not being able to find work forced their final decision to go back. They had a truck and a small trailer and put whatever they could fit into it and what household goods could not get sold were left behind. They left behind a washer and dryer, toys, a microwave, and televisions.

In Michoacán, the Robles family was living in an adobe house, with cement floors, and an outhouse for a bathroom. Their house was stifling hot and filled with mosquitos at night. Alex keeps the house very clean and organized although they do not have much. The kitchen has a small stove and no sinks or refrigerator. The dishes are washed in a bucket with water brought from outside. Alex washes clothes in an old washboard and hangs them on a clothesline. Her washing methods were reminiscent of the civil war era when people boiled their whites in a bucket on top of an open fire. Her hands were red, dry, cracked from laundry chores and cleaning. Diego has made a makeshift shower area for them to shower in; the water heater is run with wood or dry corncobs. The children's clothing is ill fitting and little Diego's shoes have been cut in the front to allow room for his growing toes. Nevertheless, despite their abject poverty they hold on to hope and display a cheerful disposition. The children are well mannered and polite.

Eddie

Ed, was born and reared in Chicago, then brought to Michoacán at the age of 15. He is working full-time in a bed and breakfast and was proud to use his English skills in helping with reservations and speaking with guests. He is a slight built young man with curly hair and hazel eyes. He looks much younger than his fifteen years. Ed was happy living in the United States; he never dreamed that he was going to end up living in México. He had a normal upbringing with his mother and father and his younger brother, who was born twelve years earlier in Chicago.

Ed always knew they were poor, but they always got by. he never lacked anything, and his parents only wanted him to succeed in school. He enjoyed school; he was good at it and always made good grades. He had dreams of going to college and being an architect. His mother and father made the decision to move back to México after his father lost his job working in a hotel as a maintenance man. When the E-Verify system went into effect, his social security number was rejected as no good. He had been using another person's social security and paid the owner a fee to be able to use it; he never knew it was a false number. Even though he had worked there for years, his boss had to let him go. His father struggled to find odd jobs, and their economic situation was getting worse. As anti-immigrant laws were passed, his father had a difficult job making ends meet. His mother became sick about that time, and they did not have insurance. In 2011, his parents made the decision to move back to Michoacán.

At first, Ed was excited. He had heard so many great stories about how beautiful Michoacán was from his parents that he was actually excited to move there. It felt like a

big adventure. He was sad to say goodbye to his friends and teachers but happy to leave freezing weather and looked forward to meeting the family he had only heard about.

R: Do you prefer English or Spanish?

Ed: English, of course, that is my native language.

R: Had you ever visited Michoacán?

Ed: No, I had only heard stories from my father and mother

R: How did you feel about moving to México?

Ed: At first I was saying, "Wait what about my friends?" My school life was important, and I didn't want to leave it. "What about my life here?" Then as I heard my parents speak, I realized that it was very hard on my parents because my dad couldn't find a job and I was being selfish. I could see they were stressed, and I knew they were struggling. I changed my attitude and began to research Michoacán in the Internet, and the more I learned, the more I got excited about it. I had never left Chicago; I had never been out of my neighborhood much and got excited about making such a journey. I figured it was going to be easy because I could speak Spanish, and it all seemed so exciting.

R: How was the initial arrival in México? How did you feel?

Ed: Wow! When we first got to Morelia, I was so excited; it was beautiful. I love the buildings and the streets, and it's so clean, not like Nogales. Humm . . . When we first got to my abuelitos' (grandparents) house, I felt so welcomed; everybody was crying, hugging us, and telling us how happy they were to have us home. I met many cousins who I had no idea even existed, and they immediately felt like I had a built in circle of friends; they were always inviting me to go places, and then I met their friends, and I never felt lonely. Here, it seems that I'm liked because I'm from Chicago and I speak English; that makes me a little popular.

R: How has the situation changed since your arrival?

Ed: Well, as I told you, at first everybody was super happy to have us back. I love having so much family, but as time has passed and things have settled down, the reality of our situation hit all of us. Having to stay with our abuelitos was fun at first, but as time has gone on, the place is too small for six people; my brother and I sleep on the floor, and the lack of privacy hasn't been easy. In Chicago, I shared a room with my brother; I used to complain about it then now I wish I had a room to share with my brother. My father hasn't been able to find full-time

work and my mom is working in a store, and they don't pay her much. That is why I'm working, so I can help my parents and I can help for my brother and me to go to school.

R: What has been the biggest challenge of immigrating here?

Ed: For me it was school. I thought I would have an easy time because I spoke Spanish, but once I got into the Prepa, I felt so dumb; it was very hard. It's funny, because here everybody thinks you're very smart because you speak English, but jumping into the Prepa was very hard and still is. I wasn't able to pass my exams because there are words that I have no clue what they mean. Another problem is that, here, you decide what you're going to study by the end of eighth grade, can you imagine? I thought that was crazy.

R: Did you have problems with the enrollment and CURP?

Ed: I never had problems; here the schools work with you if you don't have a CURP, and they gave my mom time to get it. The biggest problem is that, if you go to a public school, the teachers don't show up or they are on strike. Mom put us in the Catholic school because of those problems. Now I am getting tutoring so I can pass my exams and go on to finish my studies. In addition, here, it is only four hours of school, and you can go in the morning or afternoon. I chose afternoon from four to nine, so I can work to pay for my schooling. It's weird because, here, poor kids grow up fast; we all work and try to study.

R: Do you still see you being here as exciting?

E: [Laughs] No! It's even harder to get ahead here. I want to go back as soon as I am old enough.

Ed had been in Morelia for a year. He was surprised that time had gone by so fast. He worried about his future and felt he would get a better education in the United States, but he also worried about his mother and father being left behind.

Tony

Tony looked like the all-American kid. He had hazel green-blue eyes, freckles, and reddish-blond hair. He was tall, tanned, muscular, and athletic looking. He looked like one of the tourists he frequently served. He was naturally charming, laughed easily,

and was a happy, positive person. I met Tony as I was at an outdoor café drinking warm chocolate on a rainy day. I was on the phone speaking to my son; after I hung up; Tony approached me and struck up a conversation with me. I invited him to sit and thus began our friendship and communication. I introduced myself and told him about the project I was working on, and he smiled and immediately volunteered himself as a participant. We arranged to meet the following day after work.

R: How long have you been in Morelia?

Tony: I have been here a little less than a year.

R: How have you experienced this migration shift?

Tony: I love it! When I was in Florida living with my dad, I was getting into all kinds of trouble. My mom and dad got a divorce and my mother made the decision to leave me with my father because I needed a "father figure" to teach me to be a boy and because of my school. I was angry they had divorced and that my mother had to make such a difficult decision to leave me because it was better for me, but what she didn't know is that I was in all kinds of trouble. I was skipping classes, smoking pot, hanging out with the wrong crowd, teachers all hated me because I was failing all my classes, and my father did not know what to do with me. I got a car and quickly racked up several tickets that I couldn't pay, so I lost my driving privileges. I was always in trouble in Florida! Funny how weird life is: I felt like such a loser in Florida, but here I feel smart and important.

R: Can you explain what you mean by feeling smart and important here?

Tony: Well, when I made up my mind I was coming to stay with my mom, I was tired of getting in trouble, and I was tired of failing school. It had gotten to the point that I had started to wonder if school was even for me. The teachers would see me coming and would always make a smart-alecky remark like, "Why bother to come today, Tony?" I was tired of it. I knew if I did not leave, I was going to end up locked up. I didn't tell my parents I was coming to join my mother; I bought the ticket on my own and didn't call my father until I was about to board the plane. He did not even answer the phone, so I left him a message. By the time I got to Morelia, I called my mother and told her I had arrived; she was so shocked and surprised. I took a cab and went to Nana's house because I had that address.

When I walked in, I had everybody so happy to see me and have me; my family were all hugging and kissing me, and later that night my cousins, *Tios*, and *Tias*, all came over, and we had a party in my honor, and everybody was very happy to see me. That was the first time I felt so loved and welcomed. Mom was super happy and kept hugging me. I told her the truth that I could not go back to my old life. I told her the truth of always being in trouble. Dad cares about me, but he was always gone; he worked many hours, and I had free time to do what I wanted to do. I'm so glad I stayed here. I got my act together, I am enrolled at the Prepa, and here I'm popular because I'm from the United States and speak English, so I feel so welcomed. The teachers all keep saying I am so smart, and that makes me want to do better, so I have. School has been hard because, even though I speak Spanish, it's so different to be in school. I am being tutored to pass my exams to get into the university. I am lucky because my father sends me money, and I work and I am doing better than many other kids are. I got to the Vasco de Quiroga Prepa, which is a nice school. I take some classes in English, and I am doing great.

R: What do you think has contributed to you doing better here than in Florida?

Tony: Besides the fact that here everybody likes me and wants to be my friend, even the teachers because I am a 'Gringo', and I know English and more computers than anybody else. Honestly, they like me because I am a güero too. It's to my advantage to be white with blue green eyes.

R: Are you saying that if you were not a güero you would not get treated the same?

Tony: Absolutely! Here if you look Gringo you get special treatment or if your parents have money. It is kind of weird because nobody talks about this issue but the treatment is so different for me than for others. I do not think its racism either; I think there are not that many güeros here so when you are one people like you.

Tony works in a hotel downtown that caters to the rich and tourists that can afford to pay the fees. He is in charge of all security and is very proud to hold such a great position so young. He loves living in Morelia and has no desire to return to the United States except to visit his father.

Los Retornos: Reverse Culture Shock

It is important to listen to the stories of *Los Retornos* who have decided to return to the United States after living in Michoacán Mexico for several years because it provides a glimpse to their lived experience from a different perspective. Through Louis and Judith, readers can begin to understand the lived experiences of students who live the re-entry assimilation experience. Reverse Culture Shock, or "re-entry", is a term associated with the phenomenon of returning to one's own country and culture. Very similar to culture shock, a person entering into their home environment will have to make adjustments to reacquaint themselves with their surroundings. Unlike culture shock, most do not anticipate feeling like a foreigner in their own home. However, it should be expected. If you have made any cultural adjustments while abroad, you will have to readjust once back home. Reverse culture shock may happen for two reasons. The first is that things have changed in their absence. Neighborhoods, currency, banking systems, education and recreational pursuits all undergo regular overhauls. The acceleration of technology, in particular, drives the rate of change (Knell, 2007). Second, the expatriate themselves have changed by virtue living in another cultural context. And that change is likely to have gone unnoticed by them. They return home, feeling they are much the same people who went away and expecting to slot back into their place in the family and society. But not only have they changed, their friends and family have changed and moved on too (Knell, 2007).

According to Knell (2007), alienation is a normal stage expatriates experience. In this stage, students experience dampened euphoria with feelings of alienation, frustration

and anger. They may even feel like an outsider - a foreigner in their own country. America will be different from how they remembered it (the pollution may be worse; the pace may be more hurried and hectic; etc.) Suddenly students feel irritated with others and impatient with their own inability to do things as well or as quickly as they hoped. Resentment, loneliness, disorientation and even a sense of helplessness may pervade. All of the symptoms of reverse culture shock were described by Louis. He explained that he went through a period of feeling out of control, lost not feeling sure where he fit. School was the biggest culture shock for Louis in the United States and Mexico for Judith. Louis, experienced feelings of not knowing where he fit, in Mexico, he was very popular because he was so smart and had the highest grades, but when he got to the U.S., anybody that held that rank was a social outcast and nerd, not allowed into the "popular clicks." Louis explained that when he first arrived he took time to go to a girl's house to ask the parents' permission to date their daughter, he took her flowers and when he arrived at her house, she was rude, and unable to understand why he wanted to speak to her parents first and the girl just laughed in his face. He described it as a moment of knowing he had no clue what the social, culture norms for dating were.

Louis

Louis is a very smart, witty young man. He stands 6 feet 4 inches with green eyes and dark hair. He looks all-American Caucasian. Although he is a mixed mestizo Mexican, he is a U.S. citizen but identifies himself as a Mexican. He grew up speaking English only and had to learn to speak Spanish when he moved to México in second grade. He has a very easy going, intelligent, calming demeanor about him. He was

brought to Morelia when he was eight years old and in second grade. He lived in Morelia until he was about to start high school, when he moved back to the States. He graduated from high school in Phoenix, Arizona, excelling at his art and taking advanced placement (college credit) classes in art, science, English, Spanish, Latin American literature, and history. His GPA was 4.2 out of 5. He took college classes for 3.5 years and then dropped out.

R: What do you remember about going to México?

Louis: It was very difficult. We took a train, it took a long time, about 2 days or maybe more to get to Michoacán; I didn't speak Spanish. But, I remember making friends with some of the poor kids who were not sitting in first class, and I spent most of my time with them because I could run, pet the animals that their parents had with them, and even though we couldn't verbally communicate, we figured out how to play together and have fun. I thought it was strange these people didn't have seats, and they were put with the animals (he was making reference to third class seating). That was my first glimpse of class differences in México. I felt bad for them.

R: What was it like to go to school in México not knowing how to speak Spanish?

Louis: The elementary school I went to was a private bilingual school. I had English classes, and those were easy. It took me two months to learn Spanish fluently. Being in an immersion program really helped me to learn fast. My mom helped a lot. She was a teacher and I was tutored, so in two months, I was doing pretty well, and my grades in Spanish went way up. I would say that in six months I was completely a native speaker.

R: How did teachers, students, and neighborhood kids receive you?

Louis: Knowing English and being a *güerito* (a White kid) always helped me to get along with people. The teachers always showed me preferential treatment, and it helped a lot to have teachers not just like me, but they really focused on how smart I was. In México, if you are smart, the kids and teachers treat you with respect. I was always number one in my class with grades. It made me feel good. The kids saw me as a novelty because I was a *gringo*; they all wanted to be my friend. Looking Caucasian really helped my popularity.

R: Were you ever bullied at school or in your neighborhood?

Louis: Oh yeah, but no more than the usual with neighborhood kids. They thought I did not speak Spanish so soon, and they would try to steal my things or tried to swindle me out of my things. The barrio kids always wanted what I had. My toys, balls, a watch, even my clothes or shoes; when I did not give them my things, they would call me *Pinche Gringo* [f….n White boy], but I just laughed and went home, and the next day they wanted to play with me.

R: Did you experience any economic hardships?

Louis: No, I always had what I would have had in the United States. I had a nice home, food, basic TV, I have to watch some cartoons, and later on I lived very comfortable with cable and all the comforts of the U.S. We had money and did not struggle as other students did. I was very well off compared to other kids, even the ones in my school. Another thing that helped me a lot was that my mother was a teacher and provided me with all the right resources I needed to do well in school. I know my experience would not be the same if we were poor. I was lucky!

R: What was the biggest challenge or adjustment you faced being an immigrant?

Louis: Emotionally, it was hard the first two years; but, as time went by, I was fine. The biggest surprise for me was the school uniforms that were mandatory. I had never been in a school where uniforms were mandatory. Their uniform recognizes every school in México. In addition, schools did not have a cafeteria; at lunchtime, vendors would come in and sell all kinds of goodies and food, or you packed your own lunch. Another novelty for me was that the most popular kids were the smart ones, not the jocks; whoever had the highest GPA was very popular; I was that kid.

R: Can you expand on the statement you made about how hard it was to adjust emotionally?

Louis: It was hard emotionally because I went through a transition from the familiar to the unknown. Everything was so new, the food, smells, sounds, rhythm of everyday life, what is acceptable in society what is not. I just remember feeling overwhelmed by so much change. I remember for the first two years, I would get surprised at some of the culture norms that I thought were stupid. For example, my first birthday was a disaster. I did not know about the "mordida" the bite on the cake and how you are supposed to take a bite and some idiot will come behind you and shove your face into the cake. That happened to me and I was furious. I got a big chunk of the cake, went, and shoved into the grown man who had pushed my face into it. He tried to avoid it and fell backwards and everybody that was there was looking at me as if I was a moron or a bad kid for reacting that way. Later, I learned this is a banter and fun way, a cultural norm; I had never

been exposed to this way of celebrating birthdays. Interestingly, when I got back I was in culture shock. Kids here have too much freedom and they do not respect adults. Girls here are more liberal and have less self-respect.

R: What about enrolling in school…did your mother have any problems enrolling you? I know you were little, but what do you remember?

Louis: I remember about that. I did not have any problem getting into school. The school was very helpful and I do not recall any delays or problems.

R: What was it like to come back to the United States and go to school here?

L: It is interesting because I was once again the new novelty of being a foreign kid. The fact I looked Caucasian served me well because the kids saw me as a foreign Mexican kid that was White. To me, I was just a White boy living in a White country. It's interesting that I was a novelty like an Uncle Tom, but here in Arizona, the Mexican who is not Caucasian looking does not get treated the same.

R: What do you mean like an Uncle Tom?

L: Well, you know, like the phrase "Uncle Tom." It has become an epithet for a person who is slavish and excessively subservient to perceived authority figures; back in the days, it was a Black person who behaved in a subservient manner to White people; today, the oppression is towards the Mexican, who has become the new subservient to the dominant Anglo society. It is another barrier to cross.

R: How did you manage academically back in the states?

Louis: I thought high school was super easy here academically. I remember that they gave me an Azella test (A test for ESL students), and I was not only insulted but also angry because I was being stereotyped, and I was fluent in both languages. When I was in México, math and science were more advanced, we had to memorize so much, and we had three to four hours of homework daily. When I got here, I could not believe it; I had maybe 30 minutes of homework because I would do it super-fast. It was so easy to get an *A*. Therefore, my mom made me sign up for AP classes, and I liked those classes; they were more challenging, and I graduated with college credits. In addition, here, some subject matters are more in depth usually in the AP classes.

R: How do you feel now about your experience in México, the immigrant experience?

L: It has definitely made me more globally conscious. Living in Arizona has been a plus to speak Spanish, and as sad as it may sound, also looking Caucasian has helped me a lot. I say this because I have friends who are Mexican and are

> bilingual and look the Mexican part, dark skin, dark hair and eyes, and they have not had the same acceptance I have had. Being bilingual is a big plus; I have gotten jobs that paid me more because I could speak Spanish. I consider myself culturally Mexican and feel Mexican. I am Mexican!

The lived migration experience is not the same for everyone. Louis' story is representative of those in the higher socioeconomic sector who will always have better opportunities in education and have the potential to preserve linguistic and cultural capital *Los Retornos* bring with them in México. Louis and Tony's story is important in that it emphasizes the class divisions that still exist in México and the influence they have on the quality of education a student receives. Pierre Bourdieu defined the concept of cultural capital as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Bourdieu, 1977). The concern is that the Mexican public education is not able to serve the needs of returning students who are English monoliterate, Spanish speakers. As was previously outlined, the public school system is fraught with incompetence, corruption, inherited positions, high teacher absenteeism, and lack of resources. This limits the opportunity to preserve social and cultural capital *Los Retornos* bring with them.

Louis represents the wealthier Mexican social class and demonstrates through his experience that the quality of education one receives costs money and is reserved for the few who can afford it. Students who are struggling economically like Judith, Alexis, Diego Dora and Ed, will struggle to preserve the cultural capital they bring with them and could jeopardize accumulating a durable network of institutionalized relationships or network of people who may be able to help them attain their educational goals.

Louis' experiences in describing reverse culture shock demonstrate that there will be a need for programs to help those students who decide to return to the United States when they reach the age of maturity to integrate into schools and American culture once again.

Judith

Judith was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, for her first 14 years. Two years previously, her mother moved back to Chihuahua, México, and then Michoacán taking Judith with her. Her mother did not have the money to put her in a private school where she could have continued her studies in English; instead, she put her in a public technical high school. According to Judith,

> The school was a complete disaster for me. I knew I could speak Spanish; but when I got there, we seldom had school because teachers were always absent; the classroom was cement floors and cinderblock walls with nothing inside. We had no library and no books. If I wanted the books, I had to buy them in addition to my uniforms. We don't have that kind of money, and it was expensive for us not to be having classes because the teachers went on strike, and I found myself without school for months. I was very depressed. I missed my home, my friends, and my school and teachers. I have a lot of family there, and it is very nice to have them, but I was worried about my school. What was I going to do? Stay at home, clean, and do nothing or go to work. We did not have money, and my mom was constantly stressed out about money. I begged my mother to let me come back to Arizona so that I could go to school. She agreed and my Tía lets me stay with her. I am happy to be back and to be in school, although my mother could not come because she does not have citizenship.

Judith's story reflects the economic hardships many *Retorno* families face. The stressors of poverty on families cannot be ignored; Judith and the Robles children represent the poor socioeconomic sector in Mexico. Their social and cultural capital will be lost if their education is interrupted as it will create learning gaps and may leave them more vulnerable than ever imagined. The greatest challenge is finding funds for school, medical treatment, and daily nutritional needs.

It is important to listen to the stories of *Los Retornos* who have decided to return to the United States after living in Michoacán Mexico for several years because it provides a glimpse to their lived experience from a different lens. Through Louis and Judith, readers can begin to understand the lived experiences of students who live the re-entry, reverse cultural shock experience as another obstacle this cohort will face. It is important to highlight the reality that for students who make the decision to return to the United States they will face additional educational challenges as they attempt to reintegrate into the U.S. school system.

Through Louis and Judith, readers can begin to understand that it is a possibility that many of these students may return to the United States when they reach age of maturity, they may experience reverse culture shock, or "re-entry", and may create another phenomenon for American schools, community colleges and possibly the work force that is already saturated with low skilled workers. As was observed with Judith, her integration into a new high school in northern Phoenix proved to be another cultural shock she did not anticipate living. Judith experienced difficulty establishing friendships with classmates; she felt they didn't understand her and she didn't understand them. She was at a loss with the school spirit themes, pep assemblies, and teenage pop culture. She felt isolated, different, and alone. Her lunch time was tormenting for her due to feelings of not fitting in; Judith spent many lunches in her Spanish teacher's classroom crying. Judith and Louis' *testimonios* provide us with a glimpse of how reverse culture shock can manifest in young adults. *Los Retornos* who decide to return will face a new set of challenges in the integration process. They will feel like a foreigner in their own home

country and may even experience the same economic hardships and schooling challenges they are facing now in México.

Chapter 5: Findings

The purpose of this research project was to understand factors, which resulted in the phenomenon of *Retorno* students moving to México, identifying their migration experience, and transitioning from a U.S. educational system to a Mexican public school system. No attempt was made to generalize the data; it was an investigation of the unique life experiences, *testimonios*. The study included seven students, three teachers, two school administrators and government agency representatives. The students came from families that took their U.S. citizen children or children who had been raised in the United States and were culturally and linguistically *Estadounidenses* to Michoacán, México. Additionally, two *Retorno* students who had taken to Michoacán in elementary and middle school and returned to Arizona for their high school years were included. One cannot infer that other *Retorno* students would react as these participants did; each life and response to life's circumstances is unique. Understanding how these *Retorno* students responded to life experiences as they did was the intent of this study.

The problem was that while quantitative research provided specific numbers of students returning to Michoacán, México, the individual *testimonios*, stories, of *Los Retornos* had not been studied in depth. Based on the limited number of studies done in other states - Valencia Reyes (2008), Valdez-Gardea (2012), Zúñiga, (2008), and PROBEM Michoacán (2012); students were identified as deficit carriers not as individuals with unique talents and needs. All of the participants in this study were eager to tell their *testimonios*, and several mentioned that this was the first time anyone had asked them or showed interest in their story, thus validating the problem statement. The

method used to gather this information took the form of personal oral or written semi-structured interviews, formal interviews and observations. Initially, it was difficult to locate students attending schools in Morelia, Michoacán due to the teacher's strike. Using the snowball effect and a grassroots approach of asking people in the streets, restaurants, stores, beauty salons, taxi drivers and sidewalk cafes if they knew families that had moved back from the United States with children, the researcher was able to identify participants. Initially, participants were identified and asked personally if they were willing to participate in the study; once they agreed, all IRB protocols were respected and used to do research. Those students were between the ages of 8 and 19 in addition to their parents, teachers and school leaders. Other attempts were made to continue contacting potential candidates through other school administrators, the department of education, SEP, and through the state program PROBEM of Michoacán. Eventually, the total number of participants ended with seven *Retornos*, three parents, two *Retornos* who returned to the U.S. and five practitioners because at that number, the data was saturated.

The researcher transcribed all interviews, which aided in analysis (Riessman, 1993), and formed no theories and made no assumptions prior to the analysis of the data. There was no attempt on the part of the researcher to persuade the reader or to criticize schools, teachers or parents. This study was a narrative of *Retorno* students' life experiences. As such, it required an interpretation of those experiences (Riessman, 1993).

Societal Reception: Welcome Back

As indicated previously, the second form of integration for return migration is societal reception. *Retorno* families who returned to their homelands were well received

by their families, and the reunification of the family was a cause for celebration. All students reported they felt happy to know they had extended family and a large number of cousins and were impressed at how their families pitched in to help them become situated. Cousins who invited them to play and socialize and family outings and gatherings made integration into the community easier. None of the participants felt rejection from the community; on the contrary, each expressed his or her instant popularity stemmed from being a U.S. citizen as exemplified by Alexis, Tony, Ed, Lily, Laura and Louis.

> R- How did you first feel when you got here to Michoacán?
>
> Alexis: When I first got here, I was very excited to meet all my cousins and their friends; I did not know I had such a huge family. I laugh because when I go to the little store in the corner, they call me *El Gringito* because I am not blond, and I thought *Gringos* were only for *güeros*, White people. However, when I go outside to play, all the kids invite me to play or hang out because I am from "el otro lado"; that makes me popular around here.
>
> R- Did you feel unwelcomed in Arizona or that you didn't fit in?
>
> Alexis: In Arizona we were always worried about the Migra and that maybe they were going to take my parents. At school some kids who knew we had parents without papers made fun of us. I wanted to fight them but my mom had told me to ignore it. I felt we were different just because of that. I was mad because I was born in Phoenix but I didn't feel right. Also the news always said bad things, like my mom and dad are criminals because they don't have papers that made me feel scared and mad.

Societal reception and integration of the parents came easily in the process of family reunification and community friendships through their involvement in family festivities and church attendance; the students had transitioned from ethnic cultural captivity they were living in Phoenix to a more positive ethnic identity clarification. Jim Banks (1993) identified this concept as an individual being able to identify

personal attitudes and cultural/ethnic identity to reduce intra-psychic conflict and develop positive attitudes about their own group and is able to understand positive aspects of their ethnic/cultural group and those of others. At this level ethnic pride is genuine, not contrived (Banks, 1993). Several of the students reported feeling scared living in Phoenix, the feeling Alexis described is part of the ethnic psychological captivity students lived under the shadow of SB 1070. *Los Retornos* experienced ethnic psychological captivity while living under draconian laws like SB 1070 in Arizona. These laws stigmatized the parents and the students by referencing to unauthorized Mexicans as criminals. Jim Banks (1993) described this level as individuals accepting and believing ideas, assumptions, attitudes about his or her ethnic group that are institutionalized within the society as true and begin to respond in a number of ways such as avoiding contact with their own cultural group. The more a group is stigmatized, such as Mexicans have been in Arizona, the more they may experience psychological captivity.

Despite a few generational cultural clashes, *Retorno* families felt well received by the general community. The U.S.-born children felt very positive about the extended family they gained upon their arrival and felt their extended families treated them well and were very welcoming. The U.S.-born students reported feeling welcomed and accepted by peers. When asked if they were ever harassed and bullied by other students, *Los Retornos* stated the other children liked them because they could speak English. This experience in schoolyard positioning was observed on a Tuesday morning during recess.

The children were playing a game of soccer, and Alexis was the captain. The children were begging him to pick them: "Oye, Alexis, yo! ¡Yo! ¡Ándale, buey, escójeme a mí! Pinche gringo, ¡Ándale yo soy de tu equipo! Oye, Alexis, yo soy tu amigo, escójeme a mi!" This type of bantering went on until the whole team was formed. The term "pinche gringo" was used as a way to emphasize desire to be selected, not as a derogatory insult. It was clear they all wanted to be picked by Alexis.

When I was interviewing both Robles children about bullying, both confirmed they got along with all of their classmates:

> R: Have you experienced any bullying or confrontations at your new school?
>
> A: I have not had problems; I do not know if my brother has, but I do not think so. I like that there is less bullying here and we can play outside a lot more. The kids do call me *gringo* or sometimes *pinche gringo*, but it is not to bully; they just say that because I come from the Phoenix.
>
> D: No, I do not get bullied, but *a veces, mis amigos* call me *gringo* like they do *mi hermano*, but it is not because they are mean; they just call us that because we come from Phoenix.

Overall, children felt welcomed, accepted, and appreciated that they had more freedom to play outside than before. Their experience in different school systems was an adjustment. However, they noted the lack of resources in school was startling. Schools did not have libraries, cafeterias, special classes like art, P.E., music, sports, and drama. They also did not like the shorter school days. Students have two shifts they can attend: the *matutino*, morning shift from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon, and the *vespertino*, the afternoon shift from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. If the morning class is too crowded, they have to go to the evening class.

On a positive note, student participants enjoyed going to school. They felt welcomed and enjoyed the freedom of not being bullied. Students expressed they all had many friends who helped them and liked hanging out with them because they were "Gringitos." The students indicated they liked that they knew more than the other children did. For example, Maestra Mirta shared the following insight about the Robles siblings:

> *A mí me preocupa que los estudiantes vayan a perder lo que saben de tecnología e inglés. Nosotros les decimos Gringitos aunque son morenitos (she laughs), no es grosería les decimos eso porque vienen de alla. Ellos vinieron y aunque ya sabían hablar el español tuvieron que aprenderlo a escribir y leer pero se adaptaron rápido, y los otros niños los buscan mucho, quieren ser sus amigos.*
>
> I worry the students are going to forget everything they know in terms of English and technology. We call them little *gringos* although they are dark; it is not an insult; it is a term of endearment because they come from up north. They came, and although they could speak Spanish, they had to learn to read it and write it, but they adapted fast and learned fast, and the other kids look for them to be their friends. They want to be their friends.

The school leaders were not the only people who were concerned about the students losing their social cultural capital: English, technology skills, and culture. Parents also expressed concern that students would lose the cultural capital brought with them. The ultimate dream is for the students to return to the United States for further post-secondary education when they are of age. The parent's future goal is focused on better opportunities for their sons and daughters. These aspirations and expectations for education are a form of social capital that has been documented to affect adaptational experiences of immigrant children.

This study finds that social cultural capital made available to immigrant communities contributes to, rather than hinders, the adaptation of the younger generation

in school and afterward. These case studies have indicated that aspects of an immigrant community serve as a form of social capital as a way to affect the adaptational experiences of immigrant children. Students who adhere to strong traditional family values, have strong commitment to a work ethic, and have a high degree of involvement in the community. They tend to disproportionately to do well in school and to have plans for college, as exemplified by Tony story who turned his life around when he moved to México and became part of the family community. Community is identified in this project as extended families, compadres, church, friends, classmates, teachers, and school leaders. These values and behavioral and associational patterns are consistent with the expectations of the community and reflect a high level of integration among *Retorno* students.

The findings indicate that strong, positive, cultural orientations can serve as a form of social capital that promotes value, conformity, and constructive forms of behavior that provide disadvantaged children with an adaptive advantage. I conclude that social capital is essential to recognize and, under certain conditions, such as the one *Los Retornos* find themselves in, is essential for the successful adaptation of the *Retorno* immigrant children and youth.

The increasing return migration and foreign populations in México are indicative of larger social, economic, and political processes taking place between México and the United States. However, the second-generation immigrants who feel displaced in return migration cases need further study. Some important question that merit further research with this cohort might be: What are the long-term consequences of U.S. government

indifference to their situation? Will the R*etorno* experiences with their families and communities continue to be positive? Will loss of social, cultural capital become permanent, and will some students eventually give up on their educations? México is at a pivotal place in which it can either ignore the issue or play a role in helping the foreign children integrate. The cultural capital these U.S.-born children possess is enormous. As INEGI (2010) indicated, the overall returning migrant population has high levels of education. In addition, the children in this study had English reading and writing skills and cultural understanding of the *Estadounidense* culture that México could use in the right circumstances or job industries. Their Mexican-born, U.S.-educated siblings also brought those skills with them. As Dustmann and Weiss (2007) suggested in a study conducted with returning student migrants to the U.K., "[W]with a sufficiently high rate of return migration, the source country can actually gain from the opportunity that its citizens have to acquire experience abroad" (pp.236 – 256).

***Los Retornos:* Their *testimonios*, their voices**

Immigrant children are a vulnerable population in México and although *Los Retornos* may start out with better health and higher educational aspirations, these strengths can dissipate by the time they reach adolescence. In some ways, their needs are the same as the needs of other vulnerable low-income children. But children of immigrants also often need special help to compensate for difficulties adjusting to Mexican culture, low parental education levels, lack of access to supports and programs that don't exist in Mexico places them in a very vulnerable place. Some of the difficulties adjusting are due to their citizenship status, and most importantly, inadequate

language skills. At each stage of development, further efforts and resources will be needed to ensure that children in *Retorno* families have access to the resources they need to help them stay on a positive pathway of success. The reality is that although México is making an effort to help this new cohort of students integrate and adjust into the schools system, México does not have the resources to develop much needed help and assistance these families need. One of the major research questions this study asked was; how are *Retornos* responding to the involuntary shift from the U.S to Michoacán? Addressing this question revealed the students who are struggling economically face more challenges and are struggling with lack of resources in school and at home.

They are responding to their involuntary shift by making do with what little they have and attempt to stay positive but underneath that false bravado, they are sad and miss plenty from the United States.

For example, initially the Robles' students stated they liked playing outside because in the U.S. they couldn't do that due to safety concerns of living in the city; however, with further probing and asking the Robles children what they missed the most about living in the United States they all mentioned resources in the school, computers, internet, library, workbooks etc. Probing further revealed what they really missed was having entertainment in their daily lives, they didn't have access to computers, books or even toys, they enjoyed playing outside but missed the connectedness to more mental diversions. They missed reading and having access to a big selction of books, they missed keeping up with the latest electronic games, newest movies, and even researching topics on the internet. The students felt disconnected from the world:

R- How are you doing since you moved to Michoacán?

A- I feel like I don't know what is going on, like I miss using the computer and surfing different sites. I don't even know what new movies are out or what new games are out. I miss the library, my mom took us two or three times a week.

R- What do you do for fun?

A- We play outside all the time but it gets boring, I mean it's fun but I miss so much, I want to read and I don't have any books.

Qualitative questions can provide the specific, concrete details to guide an understanding of a particular setting. In the process of wanting to understand how the Robles children felt I asked what their daily routine looked like to get concrete information to further understand their particular situation.

R- What does your normal day look like? What do you do?

A- I get up at 7:00 in the morning and I clean up, brush my teeth and get dressed.

Then I get my brother up.

D- I get ready really fast, much faster than my brother and I eat fast

D- Yo me levanto poquito tarde pero mi mama me tiene que peinar y luego me pongo mi uniforme. (I get up a little late but my mommy has to comb my hair and then I put on my uniform).
R- Then what do you do?

A- We all eat breakfast and rush to get backpacks and then we go to school

R- What does your day look like after school? What do you do?

A- We run e here schol gets out very early, we come home by noon, we run all the way and we eat a snack like tortilla and beans and then we do homework it's real easy I get done very fast.

D- Then we have chores! I sweep our room

A- I clean the bathroom, take out the garbage, wash dishes and do anything else my mom needs help with.

R- Then what do you do?

A- We go play outside, we climb trees and play soccer, baseball or races.

D- We play for about an hour or two and then we come in and we get super bored

A- We do get tired of playing outside, we don't have anything else to do, I have read the same book more than ten times.

Furthermore, questions can provide interpretation of local meanings that activities and practices have for the group engaged in them and illuminate differences across settings (e.g., at a family gathering held at the Robles' house I noticed the paternal grandmother made frequent comments about the fact the children spoke English to visitors, she was proud her grandchildren spoke English and connected that ability to being smart. She made comments like "mis nietos son muy inteligentes, vienen del otro lado y saben ingles," (my grandchildren are very smart, they come from the 'other side', they speak English). This demostartes how one person perceives being smart and connects it to bi-lingual skills as a measurement of smartness but it may not be how another person estimates or values what constitues intelligence but although both might be considerably different from how smartness is measured, both would indicate the presence of intelligence.

For Eddie (Ed) frustration that he didn't have provacy was a stressor as well as the fact he needed tutoring to pass his exams. His initial reaction was happiness to feel complete acceptance by his family but as time passed his stressors were more magnified.

R- How are you feeling since you moved to Michoacán?

E- Wow! When we first got to Morelia, I was so excited.
When we first got to my abuelitos house, I felt so welcomed; everybody was crying, hugging us, and telling us how happy they were to have us home. I met many cousins who I had no idea even existed, and I immediately felt like I had a built in circle of friends; they were always inviting me to go places, and then I met their friends, I never felt lonely.

R- What about now? How do you feel?

E- I am frustrated! I was not able to pass my exams because there are words that I have no clue what they mean.

E- It is even harder to get ahead here. I want to go back as soon as I am old enough! I cannot believe there are no libraries or computer where I do not have to pay for use. It sucks not having those things in school or for the public. Nobody thinks about how expensive it can be to have things in the United States even the poorest have like, cell phones, internet, computers etc.

Although most of the participants expressed the lack of resources in schools was a shock, primarily, not having a library where they could have access to books they could borrow and take home. This concern was not a chief priority for Tony who was doing well.

R- How are you doing since your move to Michoacán?

T- Here everybody likes me and wants to be my friend, even the teachers because I am a 'Gringo', and I know English and more computers than anybody else does. Honestly, they like me because I am a guero too.

R- Have you encountered any problems or setbacks?

T- School has been hard because, even though I now speak Spanish, it is so different to be in school. I am being tutored to pass my exams to get into the university. I am lucky because my father sends me money, and I work and I am doing better than many other kids are

R- How do you feel now compared to when you first arrived?

T-When I first got here it was fantastic! Mi familia loves me. When I walked in, I had everybody so happy to see me; my family were all hugging and kissing me,

> and later that night my cousins, *Tios*, and *Tias*, all came over, and we had a party in my honor, and everybody was very happy to see me. That was the first time I felt so loved and welcomed. Things are great, I love living here, other than exams and tutoring, I have adjusted better than in my country.
>
> R- Are you saying that having money has given you more opportunities?
>
> T - Absolutely! I hang out with the rich kids here and it has given a status I would not have been able to reach if I were struggling like some of my other friends. I am able to make the right connections. Here it is all about connections.

Tony's experience is unique and representative of the advantages the upper class has in terms of education and upward mobility in México and ties in to social and cultural capital that Bourdieu (1977) stated is institutionalized. Bourdieu's emphasis is on the exchangeability of different forms of capital and on the ultimate reduction of all forms to economic capital, defined as accumulated human labor. Hence, through social capital, actors can gain direct access to economic resources (subsidized loans, investment tips, protected markets); they can increase their cultural capital through contacts with experts or individuals of refinement (i.e. embodied cultural capital) or, alternatively, they can affiliate with institutions that confer valued credentials (i.e. institutionalized cultural capital) (Bourdieu, 1977).

Further evidence of positive experiences through the immigration process of *Los Retornos* can be found in the children's lived experiences: Lily and Laura told a different story about their experience in school: The following is from their interview in English:

> R: How have you enjoyed living here in Michoacán?
>
> Lily: Well, it is okay; it is different; the school is different. They do not have carpet or tile on the floors, and there are no TVs, no libraries here, and the teachers are strict.
>
> Lily: I like it because we are the smartest kids in the class.

R: How do you know that?

Lily: The teacher tells everybody in the class. She says, "You all have to work hard to learn to be smart like Lily y Laura." [Both laugh at this statement.]

Lily: Sometimes the teacher lets me help the other kids who need help and that makes me feel smart.

Laura: Yeah! Me too, I like helping the kids. I feel like a teacher helper.

R: Are there things you miss about living in the U.S.?

Lily: Yes! I miss libraries, and I miss my friends and my teachers too.

Laura: Me too!

R: What language are you most comfortable using, English or Spanish?

Lily: English! I love English!

Laura: English! Me too! I love English! I like Spanish too but just a little.

R: How do you feel learning in Spanish all day?

Lily: It is okay, but at first, it was a little bit hard, but now it's easy. Teacher, did you know that we only go to school til lunch? I do not like it! I miss my art class and music class.

Laura: Yeah, me too! Spanish was a little hard—my head hurt at first, but now it is okay. I like we only go half day because I can play outside, ride my bike, or play Barbies.

R: How is school different here from the United States?

Lily: The work is not hard anymore like at first. I did not know how to read and write Spanish [she laughs hard at this], but we learned fast because we could talk. I miss the library.

Laura: I still get a little bit of headache; it is as if my brain gets so tired, but its better.

Los Retornos are not passive actors; through their *testimonios*, one can begin to understand their unique lived experiences and understanding of their needs. The

testimonios (narratives) give meaning to their lived experiences, depend largely on their historical background and the context of their lives, and are part of what makes each individual unique (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Thus, *testimonios* in these findings are powerful cultural narratives of the lives of immigrant children. Narratives are not constructed in a vacuum, nor should one individual represent them because they are part of a bigger social network.

***Carne y Leche*: Meat and Milk**

The struggles and challenges the Robles' family encountered is a situation most *Retornos* are going to encounter as was previously found in the Valencia Reyes (2008) study. Two days before my departure, I went to visit the Robles family. The children were sad to see me go. I told them I wanted to take them to the store to buy them a going away gift and wanted them to think about what they wanted very carefully. The three children huddled for about a minute, and the oldest Alexis approached me and said, "We already know what we want." I said, "Okay, let's go get it!" All three jumped up at once and shouted, "*Carne y leche*!" (Meat and milk!) I was surprised by their request and reconfirmed, "You want meat and milk?" They all smiled and started dancing around singing, "*Carne y leche*!" They explained, "We have not had *carne y leche* for almost a year." Moved by their petition, and we all went and bought a few weeks' supply of *carne y leche*, fruit, cereal, and a used refrigerator for them to freeze the meat and milk. This incident confirmed the hardships facing this cohort are not about social integration but about economics, nutrition, and even medical care.

Los Papás: The Parents

Parents also lamented the need for public libraries and a system of borrowing books like in the United States. Libraries were seen as community resource centers where families could go and not just borrow books but also use Internet. The parents commented how they missed taking their children to the library because it was a way for them to be entertained without costing money. Not only could they use the Internet and get books but they could also borrow movies and attend the many entertainment events for the children.

R- ¿Cómo estás Alex ya que tienes más tiempo aquí?

A- Bueno la verdad es que estoy sufriendo mucho pero de diferentes maneras. Me preocupa que los niños no tienen muchas de las cosas que tenían allá. Aquí no hay bibliotecas donde pueda llevar a mis hijos a distraerse por un rato. También no hay internet ni manera de rentarles películas gratis como lo hacía en el otro lado de la biblioteca. También no les puedo dar lo más básico y mínimo que necesitan como su nutrición. Me preocupo mucho que van a perder su conocimiento de inglés y tecnología. Algún dia van a querer regresar y sin inglés y el cómputo no salen adelante allá. Me desespero mucho por ellos, quiero que sigan sus estudios.

"The truth is that I am suffering a lot and in many ways. I worry that the children do not have some of the things they had over there. Here there are no libraries where I can take my kids, to have a moment of distraction, to enjoy books and computers. Here we do not have access to internet or any way to rent free movies from the library live over there. I worry I cannot even provide their basic needs too. I worry they are going to lose their English and technology skills. Without English or computer skills, they cannot get ahead over there and I hope they return some day. I worry so much for them; I want them to continue studying."

Technology in México is very expensive; the cost of having Internet is as much as it is in the United States, making it inaccessible to people of lower socioeconomic resources like many of the returning families from the United States. This inaccessibility

to internet and the cost of the internet is contributing to a larger class division of knowledge in México. For *Los Retornos* who arrive culturally English and technologically dominant the lack of resources will contribute to their loss of cultural capital that is very valuable. Tony and Ed serve as examples of how important it is to preserve social, cultural capital the students bring with them. Both have been able to find work due to their English and computer skills in an economy that has a high rate of unemployment.

For students like the Robles' who are struggling socioeconomically presents a danger of losing the English and technology cultural capital they carry. Mrs. Robles expressed her concern that her children will lose their English and computer skills due to lack of resources in the school. Dora, her youngest daughter, has already demonstrated her preference for Spanish. Diego is already code switching from English to Spanish but is using more Spanish than English. Alexis' desire to speak English is overcome by the fact nobody in the house speaks fluent English and he does not have access to libraries or computers. He has one *Moby Dick* book he has read more than ten times because he does not want to forget English. He expressed intense desire to return to the United States to study.

The Role of Women

Another surprising element in the integration process is evident in the women. Living in the United States self-empowered them to become independent women who contributed to the household income and decision-making process. Years of working and contributing equally to the home influenced the women to feel self-empowered and

helped them to reject the Mexican cultural norm of being homemakers obedient to their husbands. Their time away from México served the purpose of indoctrinating them and helping them come into their own power and awakening them to the idea that they are capable women who can contribute to the home economically and in the decision-making process. All the women stated that what they missed most was being able to work, make decisions, and contribute. They all stated they missed the feeling of being self-empowered to have their own money.

The women expressed a clash of ideals and roles they encountered upon their return. They felt hindered in México by the "Americanization" transformation they had lived; this new awakening clashed with the patriarchal cultural role they encountered upon returning. Alex and Reyna are a perfect example of this new clash:

> R: ¿Qué extrañas más de vivir en los estados unidos?
>
> (What do you miss most about living in the United States?)
>
> *Alex: Yo extraño muchas cosas del otro lado, por primero, aquí yo estoy en casa, soy ama de casa y me la paso haciendo quehaceres. Yo quiero trabajar pero tuve al bebe y ahora me la paso lavando ropa a mano y no puedo trabajar. Me aburro. Mi suegra me dice que me hice gringa y que acepte mi papel. Esto ha causado problemillas porque no estoy de acuerdo con mi suegra a mí me gusta trabajar.*
>
> (I miss many things from the other side; first, here I am at home. I am a homemaker, and I spend all day cleaning and washing clothes I do by hand. I want to work, but now I have the baby. I spend my time washing clothes by hand, and I cannot work. I get bored! My mother-in-law tells me I am now like the women in the United States and I have to accept my new role. This has caused a few problems because I am not in agreement with my mother-in-law. I like to work!)
>
> Sra. Tarasca: *Bueno para mí lo que extraño mucho es poder encontrar trabajos y contribuir a la familia. También me gusta trabajar, me distraigo y hago amigas y me la paso a gusto teniendo otros intereses fuera de la casa. Aunque el trabajo que yo hacía era difícil el cuerpo se acostumbra pero abre la mente y uno se*

> *socializa y ya no es igual. Ahorita gracias a Dios que yo voy a ayudarle a mi esposo con la tiendita porque yo sí extraño mis amigas y mi trabajo. Aquí en México la expectativa es que yo no tenga que trabajar pero ese pensamiento es de los ricos. Yo pienso que tenemos que jalar igual para salir adelante.*
>
> (What I miss the most is being able to find work and contribute to my household expenses. I like to work, I enjoy it, I make friends, and I like having other interests out of homemaking. Although the work I was doing was physically hard, the body gets used to it but working opens the mind, I socialized and it is not the same. Thank God, right now I am going to help my husband with our little store because I miss my girlfriends and my job. Here in México the expectation is that a woman should not have to work but that is the thinking of the rich. I think we have to pull together to get ahead.)

Despite the women's shifting paradigm from homemakers to working, contributing women in the United States once they arrived in México, they fell back into traditional roles of taking care of the family. Mirta was luckier than the other women were because she would be helping in the family business of their little store. Ed's mother had not been able to find work due to health problems and Alex's new baby prevented her from looking for a job outside the home.

Economics: From Dollars to Pesos

One of the major integration shifts parents with socioeconomic challenges experienced was economic adjustment to the peso economy, the job search, and not having enough money to make ends meet; these realities eventually filtered down to the children and created anxiety, hunger, and worries, as demonstrated with the Robles children who were 8, 11, and 13 years old. The question posed to them was what had been the biggest challenge they had experienced moving to México.

> Alexis: what has been hard is that my dad has not been able to find a job, we are lucky we have this house my abuelos gave us and let us live here, even though it was weird to have a bathroom outside and no carpet on the floors and other things we had en el otro lado. We do not have TV but here there are no libraries for us

to go check out books like alla. We get bored sometimes; I have read the same book many times. We also do not have an indoor sink in the kitchen, we have to help mama wash dishes outside in a bucket, and that is hard for us when it is cold outside. At least here, we can play outside and not worry about going outside like over there. Here everybody knows us and we know them and we look out for each other. My dad is working in the milpa, I go with him sometimes and its hard work, we planted corn, chiles and frijoles, which are the food we have, mi mama has tomatoes, clabazas and carrots here. If one of us wants anything else, it is not easy to get. Mi papa has gone to look for work and he would only make $13 to 15 pesos al dia that is crazy! We sell some of the food we plant but mainly keep it to eat.

Diego: My mom washes our clothes in one of those things, you know to wash clothes outside, she could not fit her washer and dryer in the camioneta when we came so she has to do that outside even when it is freezing, and I feel bad for her.

Dora: We do not have toys here so if you come again maybe you can bring us the ones your kids do not play with. Sometimes we are hungry but we do not tell mami y papi because we know it makes them feel bad, so we just stay quiet and sometimes feel hungry at night.

IMSS: *Instituto Médico del Seguro Social*

U.S.-born children cannot receive services from the Instituto Médico Del Seguro Social (IMSS); Social Medicine program in México without the Mexican birth certificate and CURP, this cohort will be denied medical attention without these documents in order. The CURP and Mexican birth certificate did not present a school matriculation challenge but it does present a barrier to receive medical attention. This fact places the children, a vulnerable population, in a delicate place if they become sick or develop chronic illnesses. I asked Alex what happens if one of the children gets sick. She responded,

¡Híjole! Gracias a dios que no se me han enfermado, pero de todos modos mi suegra sabe curar natural, con plantas y en el peor caso el de la farmacia me puede recetar. Yo le digo las síntomas y el me receta aunque a veces no tengo el dinero para la medicina.

(Thank God, they have not gotten very sick, but when they do, my mother-in-law knows how to heal with plants, we go to the pharmacist, and if I tell him the

symptoms, he will prescribe me something. I do worry about one of them getting seriously sick. Sometimes I do not have money for the medicine.)

I asked her, how was the delivery of the baby? She replied,

> *Casi lo tengo en la casa porque tuve que esperarme hasta que ya no agunataba y al final fui al IMSS (Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social). Me dejaron entrar porque tenía mi acta de nacimiento. Pero tuve al bebe a las nueve de la mañana y para las dos me dieron de baja.*
>
> (I almost had him at home, because I had to wait until the very last minute, until I could not take it anymore so that they would accept me. They took me in because I had my birth certificate; I had the baby at nine in the morning, and by 2:00 I was released.)

I asked her if she received monthly prenatal care, and she confirmed she never saw a doctor until she delivered the baby. I asked her if she had planned for another baby; she laughed and said,

> *No es que no tuve dinero para los anticonceptivos. Pensé que estaba protegida porque tenía ocho años tomándolo y no pensamos en el costo, y todo lo que se requiere para un bebe. Sí nos sentimos mal porque aunque queremos mucho a nuestros hijos no les podemos dar como antes y sí nos desespera.*
>
> (No, we never meant to have another baby; I did not have money to buy my birth control and really thought I might be protected because I had taken it for eight years. We never thought about the cost and economic strain another baby would bring. We do feel guilty at times, because although we love our children dearly, we cannot give them what we could before and we do get desperate.)

I asked her how her 6-week follow-up appointment went at the IMSS, and she confirmed she never went back because they did not have enough gas to drive to get her CURP.

The Mexican Social Security law (Ley del Seguro, 1995) currently in effect, published in the Official Journal of the Federation (December 21, 1995) is the legislative domain under which the IMSS conducts its operations. Currently, the law indicates that

Social Security has the following purposes:

- Medical assistance;
- Protection of basic necessities of subsistence;
- Social services necessary for individual and collective well-being;
- Giving out a pension, this, depending on the completion of the legal prerequisites, will be guaranteed by the State.

This situation endangers the future well-being of U.S.-citizen children taken to México who cannot afford medical care if the parents do not have the money to obtain their Mexican birth certificates and CURP. Although the cost of getting a Mexican birth certificate appears to be minimal in dollars, for a family already strapped with economic hardships, a $13.00 cost per child can be unattainable. Thirteen dollars is the equivalent of 130.00 pesos for each child. Although there is no cost to get the CURP, other costs are associated with processing paperwork and getting to the office. For the Robles family, shifting from a dollar to peso economy has taken its toll on the family, largely the children.

Another example of the hardships of living in a peso economy is Ed, he has to work to pay for his own education because public education is constantly interrupted by strikes and the family is still struggling to get back on their feet. The mother's health has not been well, she has insulin dependent diabetes and although she is receiving assistance and medical care from IMSS, her inability to find work has affected their family. To date the father was doing side jobs, and they still live with their abuelos and the boys continue to sleep in the living room.

Los Maestros: The Teachers

The social and cultural capital *Los Retornos* bring should be protected, recognized, and protected to continue its growth. Presently, for those students who are navigating the Mexican public school system, their background knowledge is endangered by exclusionary school practices; this view was reinforced in the interview with Marcela, a teacher in a private bilingual school who taught Louis when he was in Morelia, Michoacan.

> R: How long did you teach Louis? Was it one grade or more?
>
> M: I taught Louis for three years. It was amazing how fast he learned Spanish, and he had a lot of knowledge that our students did not have. For example, he knew how to use a computer, how to research on the computer, and how to write original thought, which many of our students resorted to plagiarizing and summarizing. His fluency in English and Spanish was an impressive asset. He was using computers way before any of the teachers knew how to use them.
>
> R: Do you have any *Retorno* students right now? Have you had any in the last year?
>
> M: I have taught five more since Louis. They all come with a lot of technology knowledge and they all have an eagerness to learn. My experience has been that these students have a more hands-on approach to learning and in México, we are still doing a lot of rote memorization, which could prove difficult for some students, but eventually they catch on.
>
> R: Probem has identified that many of these students arrive with low educational levels; how was your experience different?
>
> M: My limited experience has been the opposite. I have had five *Retornos* (as you call them, although we call them *Gringitos*) since Louis, and I find that these students are well prepared, want to learn and fit in. What is not been taken into consideration is the fact many of our teachers do not have any clue about the educational system the students come from. Additionally, we have to identify the type of school the students come from; we have to ask if they come from a rural, urban, suburban, poor, middle class, or upper middle class school in the United States. Just like here, who the teacher is and what school the children are arriving to makes all the difference. Another dynamic that is not addressed is teacher biases; there are teachers who are strong nationalists and have biases about the United States, and so they are going to focus on the negatives without solid

> knowledge. Many of us forget that México has great, good, and very bad teachers. I think that it is important to clarify who is doing the reporting. I know I work in a private school by choice, but I have made that choice because of the constant strikes, refusal of public teachers to continue their education, and lack of teacher accountability in public education, and whoever reads my answers may disagree with me.

Marcela's interview indicated the importance of identifying gaps in the research and the need to establish additional studies with this cohort of students through their voices. To date, experiences have been reported through adult narratives. To understand fully the immigration experience, a shift to another scheme in which children narrate their own experiences is necessary

In interviews, Maestro Nico and Maestra Mirta repeatedly stated the Robles' children were well prepared and very smart. They expressed concern the children would lose their English and technology skills.

> *Maestro Nico: Estos niños son muy listos; saben leer, escribir, matemáticas, ciencias y saben la tecnología, algo que yo ni sé. Si tengo problemas con mi teléfono inteligente se lo doy al muchacho mayor y él me lo compone. No tenemos computadora aquí porque no tenemos Internet pero este muchacho sabe mucho sobre la tecnología. A mí me preocupa que los estudiantes vayan a perder lo que saben.*
>
> (These students are very smart, they can read at grade level, write, math, science and they know technology, something I do not even know. If I have any problems, with my smart phone, I just give it to the oldest Robles boy and he fixes it for me. We do not have computers here because we cannot get internet but this boy knows a lot about technology. I worry they are going to forget everything they know.)

Recent studies have reported that the different dynamics *Los Retornos* face may have repercussions on their academic performance. Furthermore, researchers have identified the Mexican education system is exclusionary and not very welcoming. It does not provide growth opportunities for all students (Valdez Gardea & Ruíz Peralta, 2011), and

for the immigrant child in México, the exclusionary dynamics could have a different effect, if not a greater one, because of his or her being an immigrant child who is English dominant and the experience of incorporating into a new educational system in México.

School Enrollment: The CURP

Previous studies in the states of Morelos and Sonora indicated problems with school matriculation because of the lack of a CURP number for returning families (Valencia Reyes, 2008). The cases in this study illustrated that, in Michoacán, there were no matriculation obstacles for students in primary, junior high, and high schools called *preparatoria* schools. Although a standard enrollment process exists for a U.S.-born child living in México, as reported in Valencia Reyes (2008) in south central México schools, Michoacán appears to have taken a different stance on enrolling students. The requirement stipulates that parents must present withdrawal papers that confirm student's clearance for enrollment and transfer from their schools in addition to report cards, birth certificates, and parents' RFCs (Registro Federal de Contribuyentes, equivalent to a social security card in the United States) or birth certificates to establish they are Mexican citizens. Mexican law stipulates that any child born abroad to a Mexican national parent automatically becomes a Mexican citizen, granting him or her full rights of any Mexican citizen.

The CURP is the individual registry of each person living in México, either national or foreigner, as well as the Mexicans who live in other countries, and serves as a key to access the databases of the Federal Public Administration and states. There is no cost for the CURP, although in Michoacán, there are many places one can apply for it for

10 pesos, such as paper stores, copy centers, computer centers, grocery stores, and even kiosks at the state fair. If a child is born in the United States, he or she can obtain Mexican citizenship through his or her parents by going to the Mexican Consulate in their city and providing a certified copy (*Apostillado*) of the child's birth certificate. The parents can obtain a Mexican birth certificate indicating the child was born in the United States, thereby facilitating the CURP.

> *A partir de la reforma a la Constitución mexicana en el mes de marzo de 1998, si una persona se hace nacional o nace en otro país, puede obtener la nacionalidad mexicana, si por lo menos uno de los padres es mexicano. Tiene que ser registrado en una Oficina del Registro Civil en México o en una Representación Consular del Gobierno Mexicano en el exterior, como el Consulado General de México en Salt Lake City. De esta forma, es posible tener las dos nacionalidades, sin tener la necesidad de renunciar a una*. (Condusef, 2010)
>
> A modification to the Mexican Constitution made in March of 1998, indicates that a person born in another country can obtain Mexican nationality if one of the parents is a Mexican citizen. The person must be registered in the Mexican Consulate office in Mexico and the United States to establish dual citizenship. (Condusef, 2010)

If a parent does not have the withdrawal papers, the school will mail a request for the withdrawal letter to the appropriate school, but the process can take up to three months or more. Michoacanos take the law as it applies to foreign-born children seriously, but government agencies will make allowances to serve the best interest of the child:

> *El Documento de Transferencia del Estudiante Migrante Binacional es el documento de acreditación reconocido por las autoridades educativas de los dos países. Facilita la inscripción de los estudiantes en las escuelas de educación primaria y secundaria al no requerir ningún documento adicional, tan to en México como en la Unión Americana. Proporciona a los maestros y directores de las escuelas que atienden población migrante la información necesaria sobre el aprovechamiento escolar de los alumnos para que puedan ser ubicados en el grado y nivel escolar que les corresponde. Cumple con el propósito de integrar a*

> *los niños y jóvenes migrantes a la educación de manera expedita, ya que al contar con validez legal en los dos países no requiere de ningún trámite adicional para la inscripción de los estudiantes en las escuelas. A pesar de que su uso fue acordado en 1995, son mínimas las escuelas que los expiden y las que lo requieren para el registro de los estudiantes binacionales.* (PROBEM, 2007)
>
> The transfer document for migrant, binational Students is the accreditation document recognized by Education authorities of both countries. It facilitates the matriculation of students in elementary, junior high and high school, and they will not need any additional documentation in México or the United States. This provides school leaders and teachers that cater to the migrant child the necessary information about their scholastic achievement so that they can incorporate into the appropriate school level. This serves the purpose of expediting their matriculation. Despite the fact that the accord was written in 1995, it is only a minimal number of schools that even ask for it to enroll binational migrant children. (PROBEM, 2007)

According to Valencia Reyes (2008), "The lack of initiative by the local government to standardize the admission process of foreign students hinders the adaptation process of returning migrants and their children" (p.54). This statement does not support the findings in Michoacán. None of the parents interviewed complained about matriculation problems. Perhaps the four-year gap between when Valencia Reyes' (2008) study was done and the situation now has facilitated the processing of student school acceptance and records. Sra. Tarasca, whom I met in Patzcuaro, further confirmed the ease of enrollment in Michoacán:

> *Maestra, yo no he tenido ningún problema en matricular a mis tres hijos en sus escuelas; yo presente su acta de nacimiento, las ultimas boletas que indicaron que fueron promocionados y con eso luego, luego me los recibieron. Yo no tenía el CURP de ellos y me dijeron que no me preocupara que iniciaran los niños y me daban tres meses para hacer el trámite.*
>
> Teacher, I have not had a single problem enrolling my three children in school, I presented their birth certificates, the last report cards that indicated they had promoted to the next grade and right away, the school accepted them. I did not have their CURP but the principal told me not to worry that they would give me three months to bring it.

Additionally, I asked Mrs. Robles, Ed, and Tony if they had had any problems enrolling in school because of the CURP or lack of translation papers. *Retorno* parents all stated enrolling in school was very easy:

> Mrs. Robles, Alex: *Yo ya había traducido los papeles de mis chiquitos al español, pero no tuve el dinero para sacar las actas mexicanas y sin ellas no puedo sacar el CURP pero nos dejaron matricular a los niños sin ningún problema nomas nos recomendaron que lo hiciéramos pronto. Yo pienso que los que tienen problemas son los padres que sacan a los niños a medio año y no se esperan por las boletas y eso les causa problemas. Mis hijos se sintieron muy queridos y apreciados por la escuela y eso los hizo sentir muy bienvenidos.*
>
> (I had already translated my children's papers (birth certificates) to Spanish but I did not have the money to get their Mexican birth certificates and without them, I cannot get their CURP but the school let us enroll the children because we had report cards and a withdrawal letter indicating they had passed. I think the people that may be having difficulties are the parents who took their children out in mid-year and did not wait for their report cards. My kids felt very welcomed and felt happy the school was so welcoming to them.)
>
> Ed: When I first got here a year ago, I did not have any problems enrolling; the school was very helpful to my mom and me. I too did not have my CURP but they let me enroll anyway. Later on, my mom got my translation and Mexican birth certificate and CURP and took it to school. We just did not know that we should have done all that before coming. The reason I am not in school right now is because I could not pass my high school entrance exam that is a requirement of all students not just us 'gringos.' I have been getting tutoring and plan to go back in 2013. I always felt welcomed and wanted in school that made me feel good.
>
> Tony: My situation is unique because when I first got here I really did not know Spanish, so my mother suggested I look at a private school and we were all willing to make a sacrifice to pay the tuition. The whole family, Tios, Tias, abuelos, everybody pitched in to help me out. As far as enrollment because of CURP, we were in the process of getting mine but the Prepa was cool about letting me start and gave my Mom time to bring it in. I thought it was so neat that they accepted me I felt good being wanted.

It is clear that the lack of proper papers did not delay enrollment in public and private schools for U.S.-citizen children in Michoacán in 2012. Furthermore, the warm reception at the schools and the positive attitude the teachers had towards students influenced

positively the self-esteem of the students. The students felt accepted, wanted, and welcomed, and their education was not interrupted until the teacher's strike broke out.

Government Agencies: Policy in Transition at PROBEM

PROBEM had just experienced a new leadership shift due to the *Sexenio*. The new leadership assigned in April 2012 had still not taken control in May 2012, when the researcher attempted to contact the offices. Most of the previous team was replaced, and those very few who remained were waiting for the new leaders to take their positions. All activities were suspended until the new agency leaders could take control. The researcher was not able to make contact with the new leader, Ingeniero Victor López, until June 2012. Mr. López was a slight man who has been involved in education for many years; he was passionate about education reform and very dedicated to making PROBEM's programs better. Mr. Lopez was as helpful as he could be despite the fact all data had disappeared and he had inherited a disorganized office. When the researcher arrived at the offices, she saw an immense amount of supplies stacked in the outside patio and exposed to the elements; the previous leader had suspended distribution to families several months before the new *Sexenio* took place. The previous PROBEM leader had accumulated supplies like shoes, clothes, food, book bags, and school supplies that somehow did not make it into the hands of the families this agency serves. According to a secretary at PROBEM, some of the supplies were not distributed because some families did not know about the program and because they had been instructed to be careful not to develop codependency from families for their basic needs. This standard appeared not to be well thought out although good intentions existed:

> *La otra directora decía que no podíamos darles todo a los inmigrantes que venían porque muchos se acostumbrarían a pedir y otros no estaban tan necesitados; ella mencionaba que teníamos que fijarnos en quien de verdad necesitaba nuestra ayuda aunque no teníamos un marco que indicara como identificar los más necesitados, pero les dábamos ayuda aunque no tanta para hacerlos dependiente de ayuda económica porque no se podía.*
>
> (The other director used to say that we could not give immigrant families a lot because we were going to create a dependency. She also stated we had to pay attention, which families were in true need; although we had no list of indicators to identify need, but the families that came got our help although it may appear it is not a lot.)

This conversation illustrates the need to establish guidelines to identify how to measure economic guidelines to receive resources. Presently, there are no economic guidelines established to determine who gets assistance or not at PROBEM. Training in what constitutes need might help *Retorno* families receive help when they most need it. The new leadership at PROBEM has taken steps to overhaul a system that had not served the needs of these families well. They are committed to distributing the resources allocated to families in need and to develop programs that will help teachers and government leaders understand how to help this cohort, as evidenced by the news article published on October 24, 2012.

> *Secretaría de Educación a través de los Programas Binacional Migrante y de Educación Básica sin Fronteras, promueve en las escuelas del estado talleres de sensibilización para la incorporación inmediata de los niños y jóvenes que arriban de la Unión Americana, y no haya un choque cultural o educativo que les afecte en su preparación escolar* (Quadratín, 2012).
>
> The Secretariat of Education through PROBEM and Basic Education without Borders has promoted in state schools training to help school leaders and teachers sensibility training to learn how to best help young adults and children from the United States so that there is no cultural or academic clash that would influence students in their educational progress. (Quadratín, 2012)

In previous studies conducted in the state of Morelos, teachers and school leaders reported a low level of educational attainment, implying a learning deficiency in *Retorno* students, yet all the placement tests or assessments administered were in Spanish (Valencia Reyes, 2008). This same method of placement exams is used in parts of Michoacán, mostly in rural agrarian communities like Tacámbaro and Pedernales, which are parts of the "Meseta Tarasca" as reported by PROBEM in October 2012.

> *El Probem ha identificado y dirigido su atención a algunas dificultades que enfrentan los docentes al recibir a niños y jóvenes migrantes de los estados unidos, las cuales son que los estudiantes ingresan con bajo nivel educativo, no dominan el idioma español y en algunos casos, únicamente hablan inglés, además de carecer de documentos que acreditan sus estudios*. (Quadratín, 2012)
>
> PROBEM has identified and addressed some difficulties that teachers face when they receive immigrant children and youth from the United States, which are; students arrive with low levels of education, they don't speak Spanish well and in some cases they only speak English in addition to not having the right documents that verify their level of study. (Quadratín, 2012)

An important factor that cannot be ignored is the need to interview a larger group of teachers to understand their knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum with Spanish Language Learners. The fact that México's teaching professions can be bought, sold or inherited indicates a breach of practitioner knowledge. Another weakness in these data is that teachers in the state of Michoacán had been on strike for months and it was not clear at what point the data was gathered. Additionally, a representative of Probem had stated in my interview in Morelia that, after three months, *Retorno* students in Michoacán schools transition from being *Retornos* to mainstream into regular classrooms although they never received interventions as Spanish Language Learners. If this is the period used to mainstream *Los Retornos,* then it warrants further investigation to analyze at what

point after the students' arrival the research was conducted and by whom, in addition to investigating the educational levels of the teachers and previous knowledge of the U.S. educational system the teachers may have.

I posit the possibility that lack of understanding about the American educational system is contributing to the notion that students arrive with low educational levels. Furthermore, my interview with Tony, whom I shadowed, interviewed, and observed, supports the need to further study the impact socioeconomics play in how well children adapt and at what rate. Tony reported that he felt smart because the teachers noticed his background knowledge and he was bilingual and bicultural. Additionally, as was confirmed by Louis' interview, the children all reported that others saw them as smart and technologically advanced, and these attributes made them popular. There appear to be gaps in understanding the social and cultural capital this cohort brings. Victimology is a salient theme applied to this cohort in other studies like Valencia Reyes (2008); however, my findings support the need to remove this cohort as a "deficit carrier" and begin to focus on the cultural and linguistic capital *Los Retornos* bring as an asset to a deficient educational system like México.

SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública): Teachers Strike

Strikes and student school take-overs are nothing new to the Mexican public school system. Seldom do teachers worry about its effect on its most valuable resource, its students. Teacher strikes can last weeks, months, and even up to a year and, at times, can become violent as happened in Morelia, Michoacán. On May 28, 2012, 8,000 pre-schools, elementary, and junior high schools closed in Morelia, Michoacán, affecting

900,000 students left without school. The objective was to protest the new requirement for teachers to take a national evaluation exam called ENLACE. This new requirement would put an end to teacher positions being inherited, sold, or assigned by lottery. The new requirement signed into law by México's president Enrique Peña Nieto mandated a census of the nation's teachers and opened the way for replacing those who fared poorly in standardized reviews. "Professional merit must be the only way to be hired, and remain and advance as a teacher," President Peña Nieto said after signing the law (Loret de Mola, 2012). Until recently, the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) had held sway over the criteria for being appointed and retained, a practice that had led to posts being inherited or sold. The education system was believed to have thousands of phantom teachers on its books. Under the changes, teachers would have to undergo regular assessments, something that had previously never been practiced for México's primary and secondary public schools. Education reform was agreed on by the major political parties and approved by Congress and most legislatures in México's states. A key goal was to improve the educational achievements of Mexican pupils.

México's public education system has been plagued with poor performance, high teacher absenteeism, and low-test scores. However, according to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), México has one of the highest pre-K enrollments among OECD countries. A 2002 education reform made pre-K education compulsory as of academic year 2008-2009. Since making pre-primary education compulsory in 2009, México has achieved one of the highest enrollment rates

of four-year-old children among OECD countries, but high student-teacher ratios pose significant challenges for early childhood education and care (Loret de Mola, 2012).

- Graduation rates at the upper secondary level increased by 14 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 (compared with an OECD average increase of 8 percentage points); however, only 47% of students are expected to graduate.
- The percentage of 15-29 year-olds who are neither in education nor employed (NEET) is the third highest in the OECD area, but this proportion was relatively unaffected by the economic crisis. In México, women are three times more likely than young men to be NEET, the highest ratio in the OECD area after Turkey. This may reflect the large share of women who neither are in education nor employed because they are raising families.
- Expenditure on education grew between 2008 and 2009 despite a decrease in GDP. Most spending is allocated to staff compensation.

México spent 0.6% of its GDP on early-childhood education in 2010, above the OECD average of 0.5%. Moreover, México also had the highest student-teacher ratio in early-childhood education among OECD countries (more than 25 students per teacher) and the lowest absolute expenditure per child in 2009 (Loret de Mola, 2012).

As in other OECD countries, close to 100% of 5–14 year olds participate in education. This age group reached its maximum in 2007; currently, there are more 15–19 year olds in México than ever before in the country's history. As a result of the relative decline in the population of 5–14 year olds, México now has a unique window of opportunity to improve the quality of primary and lower secondary education in the coming years.

There is no doubt the teachers' strike affected many students' educations, and because of the strike, this project took a different course and focus with student participants. The fact schools were going to close allowed for only three days of

observations and only one interview with teachers and the principal because they were getting ready to strike. It also impeded access to government agencies like the SEP, PROBEM, and SEE (Secretaría de Educación Estatal) in addition to the Normal Teacher University.

Bourdieu's Theoretical Implications:

In addressing the debate over knowledge within the context of social inequality, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977) argued that the knowledges of the upper and middle classes are considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society like México. If one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, one could then access the knowledges of the middle and upper class and the potential for social mobility through formal schooling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu's theoretical insight about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has often been interpreted as a way to explain why the academic and social outcomes of people of color are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites. The assumption follows that people of color lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a result, schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help "disadvantaged" students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital (Valenzuela, 1999).

Indeed, one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in U.S. schools is deficit thinking. This deficit-thinking model is alive and well in Mexican schools; however, in México it is more about the division of class, those who have and those who do not have (Ruíz-Peralta, 2011). In the case of *Los Retornos*, they are a minority and

they are a phenomenon that is new to Mexican schools and in some states they are being treated as if they are deficient because they are English dominant (Zúñiga, 2008). Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their children's education. These racialized assumptions about minority communities most often lead schools to default to the banking method of education critiqued by Freire (1973). As a result, schooling efforts usually aim to "fill up" supposedly, passive students with forms of cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society. In the case of *Los Retornos*, teachers in Valencia Reyes (2008) study frequently complained *Los Retornos* did not know Mexican history, social studies and civism; however, teachers did not value the other knowledge that students brought with them from the United States. García and Guerra (2004) found that such deficit approaches to schooling begin with overgeneralizations about family background and are exacerbated by a limited framework to interpret how individual views about educational success are shaped by personal "sociocultural and linguistic experiences and assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes" (p. 163). Educators most often assume that schools work and that students, parents, and community need to change to conform to the already effective and equitable system. Indeed, García and Guerra (2004) acknowledged that deficit thinking permeates U.S. society, and both schools and those who work in schools mirror these beliefs. They argued that this reality necessitates a challenge of personal and individual race, gender, and class prejudices expressed by educators, as well as a "critical examination of

systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from no dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds" (p. 155).

This deficit-thinking attitude toward students returning to México has already been exposed in the Mexican school system. They are labeled as learning deficient and self-isolationists because of cultural barriers they confront when entering their new school system in México (Valencia Reyes, 2008, Zúñiga, 2008, Ruíz-Peralta, 2011). Thus, multicultural education should be part of the educational process Nieto (1996).

Interpretation of findings:

Based on this research alone, it is impossible to determine whether any singular sub theme is more important than the other is. Nor can one draw any conclusion from the emergent data that all the candidates were from Michoacán schools and counties, that they dealt with socioeconomic challenges, or that they all experienced a trauma through their migration experience. While those anomalies differentiate this research from others, more study is called for to determine whether those may be inconsequential or significant factors for the *Los Retornos* phenomenon. What is conclusive from this study is that all of the participants in this study had a positive experience moving to a new country in terms of relationships, all loved English and computers, and all of them were struggling economically at different levels. What is also conclusive is that all of these individuals thrived on and yearned for deep, meaningful relationships both with friends and with family.

Their life stories revealed that they all see English and technology as an asset and worry that their schools are not meeting their needs with the exception of Tony, Lily and

Laura, who had a stronger economic advantage than the other participants did. While this study included no quantitative analysis, a quick review of the interview transcripts showed that the majority of conversation with these *Retorno* students centered around relationships both good and bad. All of them particularly enjoyed a special privilege with their teachers who recognized their special talents. The interviewees placed much less emphasis on academics in the discussions than they did on not having access to resources. For example, when they spoke of lack of resources, they spoke of feeling bored, not having books, not feeling that sense of connectedness that the Internet offers, they explained what resources the school was lacking as what they missed most from the United States because they missed the mental stimulation these resources offered them.

Results and prior research:

Dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been written about return migration, migration north and seasonal migration; few cover U.S. citizen children now living in México, *Los Retornos*. The findings in this study show that in keeping with the literature, these *Retorno* students fit the standard research profile, but they also presented some unexpected data results they were well adjusted, assimilated to their schools well, and showed extraordinary resiliency to change.

Previous studies have concluded that *Retorno* families, returning to their home states, often find that incorporating into society is sometimes a bigger challenge than anticipated. One of the chief reasons is that their perceptions of how life used to be is often distorted by years of separation, lack of job opportunities, and the socioeconomic shift from dollars to pesos. To understand these challenges, Portes and Zhou (1993),

outlined three forms of incorporation that returning immigrant families experience: government policies, community reception, and their familial community. This framework can be adapted to the return migration experience of *Retorno* parents and their U.S.-born children who have lived or are living the experience of return migration. Unfortunately, often the agencies designed to help this cohort become the roadblocks these families must learn to navigate to have access to much needed resources supposedly available to them. It is important to identify that socioeconomics creates a class division and influences the challenges and level of challenge each individual family experiences.

Discussion of Results

Glatthorn (2005) proposed that the discussion section should answer the primary question, "What does your study mean?" (p. 207). In the context of this particular study, the primary result means that understanding *Retorno* students, and the phenomenon of U.S. citizen children and culturally Estadounidense raised students in particular, is incomplete and emerging. The findings from this study validate much of what has already been reported in other states in México: Valencia Reyes (2008), Ruíz Peralta (2011), and Zúñiga (2008), PROBEM Michoacán (2012) but also revealed the importance of understanding that *Los Retornos* are neither monolithic nor homogenous. Each individual brings their own story, background knowledge and American experience and although this study included several new discoveries such as parental concern for medical treatment, basic nutritional needs and lack of library and technology resources, there are several commonalities already discovered in previous studies. Three major themes unearthed in this study were lack of resources in school, English and technology loss, and

economics emerged from the data. While the participants discussed many different topics, the majority of the deep, meaningful conversations centered on relationships because these relationships make them feel welcomed and accepted. Relationships were very important to *Los Retornos,* they enjoyed and valued relationships as anchors of support and focused primarily on family, friends, and school.

Recommendations for practitioners and school leaders:

It may be time to revamp not only hiring practices and teacher evaluations but also leadership, curriculum, and instruction to meet the needs of *Los Retornos* and their families. In speaking with parents, a common thought they all shared was the lack of transparency from the school and its lack of communication with parents. The parents were upset their needs went unheard. The first step to improve schools is to allow parent participation so that parents understand the important role they play in student achievement.

Traditionally, schools have allowed parent involvement to evolve on its own, and the disparities in participation levels among schools have been interpreted to be a lack of interest on the part of certain communities, especially those schools that serve communities with high transience, poverty, and crime (Sanders, 2010). However, no parent can be completely prepared for the trials and tribulations of every stage of parenthood. When parents are faced with economic challenges that force them to work two or three jobs, leaving children in the care of an older sibling or making them latchkey kids, problems are confounded and involvement is essentially impossible. Students who live in poverty are more likely to have minimal or no parent presence in school (Kozol,

2005). Misconceptions abound about parents living in poverty. Many think there is a lack of care or interest on the part of such parents; however, research has shown exactly the opposite. Principals need to approach parent and community involvement the same way they do curriculum, professional development, and other issues critical to school life. México has traditionally not allowed parents to participate, and the concept of forming PTAs (parent-teacher associations) is new or not enforced (Sanders, 2010).

Implementing a multicultural education curriculum will help to implement the new guidelines that President Peña Nieto is promoting with mandatory English beginning in Pre-K. With the phenomenon of returning parents with English-dominant children, multicultural education makes sense. Multicultural education is controversial because not only it has the potential to mobilize communities of learners as social change agents but also because it makes educators rethink their ideas of what constitutes effective teaching (Ovando & Combs, 2011). *Multicultural education* today is defined by leaders in the field as a comprehensive approach to schooling that can touch on virtually every aspect of the educational process, from power and decision-making structures to curriculum content to instructional practices to community relations (Nieto, 1996; Ovando & McLaren, 2000).

According to Nieto (1996), multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent (Ovando & Combs, 2011).

Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. México would benefit from multicultural education, as it would permeate interactions between students, parents and the community. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes the democratic principles of social justice. The seven basic characteristics of multicultural education Ovando & Combs (2011) outline in this definition are as follows: is *antiracist education, basic education, important for* all *students, pervasive, education for social justice*, is a *process*, multicultural education is *critical pedagogy*. (pp. 307–308)

The tendency of the United States has been to perceive biculturalism as an abnormality (Ovando, Collier & Cummins, 1992). This tendency to view biculturalism negatively is related to much linguistic and psychological work conducted during the first half of the 20th century that suggested bilingualism was an undesirable trait (Ovando & Combs, 2011). Racism overtly shaped U.S. social institutions at the beginning of the 20th century and continues more subtly to affect U.S. institutions of socialization in the beginning of the 21st century. Researchers, practitioners, and students are still searching for the necessary tools to effectively analyze and challenge the effect of race and racism in U.S. society. This same paradigm exists in some parts of México as it applies to *Los Retornos;* in the Valencia Reyes (2008) study, teachers did not see biculturalism as an asset but as a negative abnormality. México's researchers and practitioners have to find

the necessary tools to be effective and challenge the biases, racism and stereotypes that may exist in the classroom for *Los Retornos*.

Recommendations from the participants

At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the participants to be specific and to have a purpose they want to express to school administrators reading this report their expectations and needs. The question was phrased this way: if you could say anything to those in authority about your experiences, hopes, understandings, etc., what would you tell them? One could interpret their responses (Riessman, 1993), but the strength of their own words needs no interpretation. Tony began; "Let teachers want to help a little more so that we don't have to spend our own money on tutoring to pass exams for us to graduate high school." Ed focused on teachers' unwillingness to stay after school or to offer additional help; for his final speech, saying, "If the teachers are just there doing their job and going home right away then it shows they care only long enough to get the job done. Therefore, I guess I just feel like if my teachers were more passionate about helping me, then it would have been so much easier to be ready for my exams. Instead, I am working to pay not just for my tuition but to get additional tutoring. Lily and Laura focused on wanting more school hours. "Four hours is too short and I want to learn." Alexis focused on a computer room, "I cannot believe we do not even have internet at the school nor a school phone. We need those things for us to keep learning English." Diego was more practical, "I would say we need books and computers." Dora whom had not said much the whole time expressed her desire for

breakfast and lunch. “I want them to have free lunch and free breakfast like in my old school.”

Future research:

Further study should be done to determine whether lack of resources might eventually generate decisions to drop out of school or continue their post-secondary education. In addition, one should research the relational aspect in *Retorno* students to determine the strength of need, and whether lack of money will have any bearing on their educational attainment in México. Research is recommended to determine whether *Los Retornos* will be able to preserve their social cultural capital and to find out if it will be recognized and valued, as it deserves to be. Finally, more research is needed to determine if current interventions for *Retornos* like Tony and Ed in high school meets the needs and expectations of those represented in this study.

Epilogue

As the study concluded and the findings and analysis were complete, I found myself in a special, emotional position. I understood, and have lived what these seven *Retorno* participants experienced; I was in their heart. I felt their loss and pain; I understood their stress, fear and their dreams. I related to their desires, concerns and wishes, and more than anything else, I wanted to help them.

Time moved forward, as did they. I came to realize that while I understood these people (perhaps better than they know themselves), I am one of them. I cannot change their situation, present or past, but I can affect the future of others following their path. It

is my wish and desire that through this qualitative research study on *Los Retornos* and through the telling of their stories, policies and lives will be changed. I am blessed to be friends with some of the participants because of this research. Even if I never see them again, I am privileged to call them my friends. I wish nothing but the best for them wherever life leads them.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW I

Cuestionario para Estudiantes [Questionnaire for Students]
Preguntas específicas [Specific Questions]

1. ¿Tuviste algún problema (s) para incorporarte a tu escuela (en México)?(SI) (NO) ?Cuál (es)?
Did you have any problema(s) incorporating into your school in México? Yes? No? Explain

2. ¿Es diferente estar en la escuela en EUA y en la Mexicana?(SI) (NO) ¿por que?
Is it different to be in school in the United States and in México? Yes? No? Explain

3. ¿Considera que las escuelas, en México, debería apoyar a los niños (as) que regresan a México después de haber estudiado en EUA?(SI) (NO) ¿Cómo?
Do you think that schools in México should support students that return to México after having studied in the United States? Yes? No? How?.

4. ¿Cómo te gustaría que tus maestros te apoyaran?
How would you like your teachers to support you?

5. ¿Cómo te gustaría que tus compañeros de la escuela te apoyaran?
How would you like your classmates to support you?

6. ¿Tus compañeros de salón son distintos a los que tenias en la escuela en EUA? (SI) (NO) ¿Por qué?
Are you classmates different from the ones you had in the United States? Yes? No? Explain.

7. ¿Se te ha hecho difícil estudiar en México? (SI) (NO) ¿Por que?
Has it been difficult to study in México? Yes? No? Why?

8. ¿Qué tipo apoyos necesitas para estar mejor en tu escuela?
What type of support do you need to be better in your school?

9. ¿Cuál es la diferencia de vivir en México y EUA?
What is the difference living in México and the United States?

10. ¿Dónde te gusta vivir en México, o en EUA? ¿Porque?
Where do you like to live, in México or the United States? Why?

APPENDIX B

Themes	Major Categories	Minor Categories
Immigration experience	Life style Change	Friends Home Family Moving Play time: Inside/outside Economics
	School Experience	Language New teaching/ learning styles Resources: Library, computers, exams Bullying School yard positioning
	Mental Health	Relationships Self-esteem Stress Depression/happiness
Services/Barriers	Lack of knowledge	Curp School Requirements Services available
Attitudes	Expectations	Family/ self /School/ Own beliefs /peer pressure

APPENDIX C

[CONSENT FORM/INFORMATION LETTER]

Date:

In The Shadows: The Invisible Cohort of Mexican Diaspora
Dr. Carlos Ovando
Ms. I.G. Sanders
Arizona State College of Education
480-220-5951
igquezad@asu.edu

You are invited to take part in a research study regarding *Los Retornos*, English dominant students coming from the United States.

What the study is about: The purpose of making this project is to gain a better understanding of the student's experiences as they navigate the Mexican educational system.

What you will be asked to do: As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an approximately 45 minute long focus group with other parents. The group will be asked to respond to and discuss experiences as a new arrival to México and a new school by the facilitator. A focus group is a way for me to get to know the parents and encourage discussion about the experiences found upon returning to México. Because I will meet with parents in a group, setting complete confidentiality cannot be maintained; however, I do ask that participants keep the information discussed confidential.

Risks and Benefits: Due to the sensitive topic of immigration and being forced to leave the United States addressed in this study, the questions asked, and/or the discussion could be emotionally upsetting to you as a participant. Results from this study will be used to expand on the literature and knowledge of Mexican Transborder families.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may choose to leave for a particular question, or simply not contribute to the discussion for a particular question. Participating in this study does not mean that you are giving up any of your legal rights.

Your answers will be confidential: The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be kept on tape recorders and then destroyed once the discussions have been fully transcribed. Transcriptions of the discussion will be kept on a personal computer to which only the researcher has access. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

If you have questions or want a copy or summary of the study results: Contact the researcher at the email address or phone number above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing to participate to in the study.

_____ _____
Signature Date
By signing below you are agreeing to be taped.

_____ _____
Signature Date

APPENDIX D

WRITTEN CHILD ASSENT FORM
In the Shadows: The Invisible Cohort of Mexican Diaspora
An Ethnographic study of *Los Retornos* living in Morelia, Michoacán

My Name is Ms. Sanders; I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dr. Carlos Ovando in the Department of Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, at Arizona State University. I am asking you to take part in a research study to identify U.S. Citizen and English speaking students who are now attending school in México.

Your parents have given permission for you to take part in this study. If you give your permission, participation will include:
• 2 surveys about Spanish and English that will take approximately 20 minutes each.
• Group talks and /or one on one interview. We will meet 2 times a week, for 30 to 45 minutes. You will be asked to participate in a group meeting to get to know you better and to encourage talk about your experiences moving to México. Because we are meeting in a group your complete confidentiality cannot be maintained because the others in the group will hear what you want to share; however, your real names will be protected and nobody will know your true identity. Some of you may be asked to interview alone.

• My Photo Project. I will ask you to take pictures that tell your story and experiences in a new school system. I will provide you with a disposable camera, and I will provide a training session.
You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.
I will only take pictures of you if your parents let me and if you agree.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (602) 475 - 3551.

Sincerely,
Ms. Sanders

Signing here means that you have read this form or have had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study.
Signature of subject_____
Subject's printed name _____
Signature of investigator_____
Date_____

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Irene Genevieve Quezada Sanders [Genevieve] has more than 20 years of experience in education. Genevieve Sanders has experience as a secondary school teacher, community college teaching and school leader. Ms. Sanders navigates the education highway to help parents, teachers, and students feel at home in any educational setting. As a master teacher, assistant principal and principal, Genevieve understands education and offers a unique perspective to the education experience. Her love of knowledge is reflected in her thought- provoking articles for The Examiner on the charter school movement and parent universities. She is a transborder person who was born in México City, México, and spent many years in Morelia, Michoacán, México, before moving to the United States. Ms. Sanders is fluent in English and Spanish and has spent the majority of her life navigating two worlds, México and the United States. Her experience is unique as she has experience in private, public and charter school settings in México and the United States.